

INDIAN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

BY
S. FYZEE RAHAMIN

(Illustrated)

BOMBAY
1947

FIRST PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 1947

Copyright

Printed and Published in India by G. S. Borker at Wagle Process Studio and Press Ltd.
Lakshmi Building, Sir Pherozshah Mehta Road, Fort, Bombay

CONTENTS.

Foreword
Preliminary.
Individual and collective Interest
in Indian Art.

CHAPTER I.
Indian Art.

CHAPTER II.
Laws and Principles of Indian Art.
Chitralkhanda Shastra.
Simplification of Laws.

CHAPTER III.
Reference to art in Ancient Literature.

CHAPTER IV.
Components and Aspects of Indian Art.
Religious Art.
Symbolism in Indian Art.
Yoga in Indian Art.
Imagination in Indian Art.
Religion in Indian art.
Beauty in Art.

CHAPTER V.
Unrecorded Period in Indian Art.

CHAPTER VI.
Ajanta and Indian art.
Ajanta Paintings and Dravidian Art.
Paintings of Ajanta.
Faults in the Paintings of Ajanta.
Bagh Cave Paintings.

CHAPTER VII.
Medieval Art.

CHAPTER VIII.
Indian Art During the Moguls

CHAPTER IX.
Schools of Painting.

CHAPTER X.
Modern India Art.

Indian Sculpture.

CHAPTER I
Silpa Shastra
Mention of Sculpture by Ancient

CHAPTER II.
Silpa Mansara.

CHAPTER III.
The Influence of Yoga.

CHAPTER IV.
Gandhara Sculpture.
Sanchi Sculpture.
Ellora and Elephanta.
Sculpture in Borobudur in Java.

CHAPTER V.
Sculpture in the Middle Ages.
Conclusion.

CONTENTS.

Foreword
Preliminary.
Individual and collective Interest
in Indian Art.

CHAPTER I. Indian Art.

CHAPTER II.
Laws and Principles of Indian Art.
Chitralkhana Shastra.
Simplification of Laws.

CHAPTER III.
Reference to art in Ancient Literature.

CHAPTER IV.
Components and Aspects of Indian Art.
Religious Art.
Symbolism in Indian Art.
Yoga in Indian Art.
Imagination in Indian Art.
Religion in Indian art.
Beauty in Art.

CHAPTER V.
Unrecorded Period in Indian Art.

CHAPTER VI.
Ajanta and Indian art.
Ajanta Paintings and Dravidian Art.
Paintings of Ajanta.
Faults in the Paintings of Ajanta.
Bagh Cave Paintings.

CHAPTER VII.
Medieval Art.

CHAPTER VIII.
Indian Art During the Moguls

CHAPTER IX.
Schools of Painting.

CHAPTER X.
Modern India Art.

Indian Sculpture.

CHAPTER I
Silpa Shastra
Mention of Sculpture by Ancient

CHAPTER II.
Silpa Mansara.

CHAPTER III.
The Influence of Yoga.

CHAPTER IV.
Gandhara Sculpture.
Sanchi Sculpture.
Ellora and Elephanta.
Sculpture in Borobudur in Java

CHAPTER V.
Sculpture in the Middle Ages.
Conclusion.

By the same author:

GUILDED INDIA	— A NOVEL
DAUGHTER OF IND	— A PLAY IN 3 ACTS
INVESTED GOD	— A PLAY IN 3 ACTS
BENI-ISRAEL IN INDIA	— A HISTORY
MAN & OTHER MYSTIC POEMS	— MYSTIC POEMS

FOREWORD

In the light of all that has been seen in recent years we know that no person can be a good artist of his own country unless he understands the art of the world. The aim of art is to turn the mind around towards the light so that it may receive the truth from creation. This sharpens the power of understanding, judgement, perception, and gives ability to distinguish between truth and error.

Just as the world is divided into nations and races so their art is divided into its distinctive character, yet the intellectual and spiritual undercurrent is one, and all great works of art are a common property of all Nations.

Art proper has no dispute, it can reconcile discords and narrow-mindedness in human thought of different spheres, as all high expressions are born of their very perfection.

Art alone can make men and women aware of life's opening, stir imagination, inspire constructive thinking and gain mastery over the forces of nature by understanding them. Art will remove stunted conception and convey knowledge of the abstract, raise life to a higher plane, and associate with richer colour. All good art magnifies and enriches life in whatever medium it presents itself, whereas fallen art leaves the community coarse, dissipated and vulgar.

To-day India is neither conservative nor venturesome, and the art works produced in this country do not make or express the qualities of the soil or climate, and National characteristics are entirely absent. Whenever the Indian artist lands on new ground the result is very amusing and often shocking.

Humanity to-day lives a strange and artificial life, and events of the past quarter of a century has rendered their minds restless. During this uneasy and venturesome period all dignified and tranquil expressions of art have been replaced by a violent set-back. Art all throughout shows confusion and agitation, quieter themes have been superseded by sensational motives, and every attempt made in art productions is bizarre and indiscriminate. Out of this turbulence, however, we hope a form may emerge as a light that will hold a promise of the dawn of New Era.

PRELIMINARY

The present work is written with a view to giving general information on the subject of Indian painting and sculpture without going into its history or its technical accomplishments, in the hope that it will interest both the student and the general reader. By knowing the history of art you will not know art, nor can you produce art by exhibiting its technique and mannerism, all of which help to distract one from the main issue.

It is not possible to understand Indian painting without understanding the philosophical, religious and traditional attitude of the people. This side of Indian culture is the direct expression of the race, and art cannot be isolated from the spiritual life of India. Indian art is so entwined with the religion of the people that anyone unfamiliar with the traditional expression of the country will completely fail to grasp its inner meaning, and those who have sought to know anything of Indian art without its religious and philosophical background have misjudged this art completely.

In this work an attempt has been made to show that the foundation of Indian art is connected with India's deep-rooted philosophy and its culture, which moulded the character of the Indian artists of ancient days. All forms expressed in art are based on this mental attitude. No superficial adaptation can cause the Indian's real being to be influenced, in fact the more he gets under alien influence the stronger becomes his inner convictions.

The light of India's ancient culture which is spread over Indian soil is still under the control of its law-giver and the spirit of this ancient Rishi moves undisturbed over the country's destiny, providing the force needed to keep the candle of his culture burning. This is evident, as in spite of strong outside influences the Indian comes into his own without effort or pressure whenever opportunity arises.

Individual and Collective interest in Indian art

Indian art has been misrepresented by almost every writer on the subject; therefore misunderstood all over the world. The informant in most cases is an English schoolmaster with a Macaulaylan idea of educating the Indians or an interested dilettante, an Orientalist, a dealer or an indifferent painter with sufficient means to exploit the subject, with the result that it has created a chaos that amounts to a national calamity.

Apart from individuals there are several art societies in India and abroad who have further helped to misguide the student. The India Society in London has displayed great interest in Indian art and asserts that it is the only recognised body that has been responsible for having claimed the attention of the world towards India art. This is true so far as their propaganda is concerned, but the India Society has never attempted to explain the true aspect of Indian art or its ideal. The India Society is concerned with bringing out publications without inquiring into the artistic merit of the writer or if he is qualified to express his opinion on the subject. Even in arranging lectures and exhibitions the Society is conservative and has rarely given opportunities to the right authorities and in their misdirected enthusiasm more harm has been done to Indian art than the Society realises. Organizations such as the Bombay Art Society can hardly be taken seriously where the question of Indian art is concerned.

CHAPTER I

INDIAN ART

Indian art, like India's philosophy poetry and music seeks realisation by understanding the unseen through the seen, and to achieve this aim it uses symbolism and convention to reach the goal. To imitate or record what is already in existence is not the mission of Indian artist, but to see that which exists and discover the purpose of its existence is of greater value to the Indian artist than just "holding a mirror up to nature."

The artist realizes that sense sees a form and transmits the impression to the mind. The mind accepts it and asks itself what is this form? What was it before? To whom did it belong? When these questions arise, the mind draws on its past memory when it is able to fix the idea of its original source; why and from where the form has arisen, and so it goes on developing the impression and distinguishes various elements that it is connected with, and then fixes that position of the created form which is to be produced then he is ready to draw and paint. In this the artist follows the creation before he fixes ideas in mind; he considers the works produced by Nature, which he has to reproduce where all reasoning life and unreasoning things are subdued in material form by the moulder and the maker and as the form takes that particular attitude in coming into being the artist's mission is to realise the motive completely, then only can he successfully and intelligently create his pictures and mould his statues.

In material extension the beauty of the artist's mind enters into the object: this can be perceived whenever you look to the wisdom of the man who created it, by passing all appearance and catching only the inner motive, the truly personal. All this is not an idea but something of the realm of higher thoughts communicated into form by the mind.

True artist who wants to convey the meaning of the object before his eyes is not conscious of the object's reality. The artist is the medium of life which inspires him to express its significance through the form. There is no conscious effort on his part to preach a particular doctrine, his message is conceived directly, and given direct expression which reveal his experiences with reality. Appearances of such inspirations strengthens the artist's mind with a power which the ordinary consciousness will not reveal. This inspiration which the artist receives is an unusual energy, uninvited, therefore beyond his control, its appearance invests the artist with ability which at normal moments he himself will lack. Art produced under these conditions is not moral preaching, it is art, poetry, and philosophy combined with personal experiences without any thought of an ulterior objective. This art has a definite function which lies in the fact that it imparts more value, more beauty and more life to what would otherwise be valueless and dead.

Indian philosophy, religion, and ritual, offers a stone-house of psychological and metaphysical wisdom. It contains rich treasures for artists recognition, which has to be used in all its psychic reality. The Indian believes in faith, and has an understanding of faith in an intellectualised form. The practical regularities prescribed to the artist by philosophical and religious significance must be seen in his work, and he adopts them, as they are to him wise, profound, and advisable, and it would be a mistake to question whether they are absolutely right in their attitude. Anyone who becomes conscious of a significance by entering with his mind and heart into an objective form creates form within himself. This is revealing himself according to the divine will—and not as the individual wishes. The artist who strives after personal expression and whose mind is intent upon inventing new forms is at a disadvantage in religious recognition. Philosophic and religious art alone succeeds in manifesting invisible things in the visible world.

Indian art did not seek reality as its aim, but through concentration and imagination it tried to reach the truth that could be seen and understood in all ages. This inspiration that produced art forms was the ideal

Indian art and not the mere copy of nature. Appearance helped the artist so far as he could get the idea that awakened the truth behind them, the unseen was more real than that which is called real. All forms for the artist are incarnation of human ideas and each is but an expression of some action of the individual that has been and it is this truth the Indian artist wishes to reveal in his painting.

Nature is overflowing with millions of individual manifestations and is waiting to be recognised by the living; to understand them fully the artist has to identify himself with these reflections and only then can he explain their inner significance in his work. The Rishis of ancient days who established this ideal to represent Nature, fully understood the joys and sorrows of creation in Nature and established principles, the practice of which, made it easy for the artist to follow the ideal, making it clear that only by following them the aim would be reached.

This idea guided the thoughts of the Indian artist in the past; his chief concern was to expound the great truths in Nature and therein lay his immortality; works produced under these mental conditions were perfect because they were impersonal; how can one man's labour show the result of centuries of race expression?

It is in this mental attitude that the ancient thinkers of India,—the responsible authorities,—who worked out a scheme consistent with the age, and thought of principles that brought about sure results. These authorities placed high value on the power of the human imagination and popularised the idea of wisdom and philosophy amongst its people. This attitude in itself calls for human advancement and the authorities paved way for those who wished to rise on the ladder of life which is the real progress in the world.

Indian sages discouraged individual achievement. This ambition in the individual they knew would never justify race expression, and would only bring selfishness to the artist. This realization gave the artist the feeling that to express the spirit of the race he must submerge himself for the national cause. That is why we do not know India's artists by their names.

CHAPTER II

LAWS AND PRINCIPLES OF INDIAN ART

The art of painting and sculpture in India is a part of the existence of the Indian people and evidence of this is to be found throughout its history, mythology and tradition. Rishi Apastam, an ancient sage, mentions "Kala" (arts) in a volume supposed to have been written by him called "Karm-Budhisar"; a little information concerning this work will prove useful.

In the introductory poem of this volume the Rishi invokes the great Lord Umapathi as the "Mahashilpakar"—the great builder—after offering homage to the mighty creator, the Rishi expounds the principles of his Shastras.

In the beginning of his work Rishi Apastam refers to another Rishi prior to himself by the name Kashyap Brahm, as the founder of "Silpa Shastra". This sage divided the Silpa into two parts "Silpa Shastra"—Laws of architecture and "Chित्रलेखना शास्त्रा"—Laws for drawing pictures, and it is with "Chित्रलेखना शास्त्रा" that we are primarily concerned in this volume.

"Chित्रलेखना शास्त्रा" was divided into 14 "Vibhagas"—classifications, for 14 different kinds of human understanding; 7 for the higher type of intelligence, and 7 for the mediocre, to be expounded to the people who were so qualified to understand its contents.

Below I am giving a brief note about the 14 volumes mentioned with names of their authors, numbers of verses, etc., etc.

No.	Name of Volume	No. of Verses	Division of Verses	Name of Authors.
1	Brahma Silpa	One crore	316	Rutu Rishi
2	Skand "	80 lacs	132	Vishnu Rishi
3	Rubhu "	20 "	64	Mani Rishi
4	Surya "	60 "	403	Kandikya Rishi
5	Dev "	50 "	700	Brahm Rishi
6	Yadna "	25 "	80	Sairayyan Rishi
7	Twastu "	60 "	214	Tawstu Rishi
8	Gaudhava "	50 "	80	Garud Rishi
9	Guhya "	40 "	142	Sund Rishi
10	Shesh "	80 "	701	Shridhar Rishi
11	Kurma "	30 "	306	Pingal Rishi
12	Varuna "	25 "	214	Noag Rishi
13	Sudarshan "	60 "	819	Yundil Rishi
14	Dauddhar "	20 "	406	Shesh Muni.

Rishi Kashyap Brahm originator of "Chित्रलेखना शास्त्रा" decided that the present mental state of humanity was in the seventh stage whom he termed "Bhoo Lok",—worldly people—and made Twastu Rishi responsible for their training. Twastu Rishi wrote the "Silpa" that is called after his name "Twastu Silpa".

To simplify "Twastu Silpa" Chhaya Purush, another Rishi was given the responsibility, so he divided "Twastu Silpa" into twelve sections and these 12 sections were further simplified and divided into 153 parts and as many works were written under the guidance of Rishi Chhaya Purush.

CHITRALEKHNA SHASTRA (Art of Drawing Pictures)

The following is a brief note of the contents of each of the 12 sections of "Chित्रलेखना शास्त्रा" as composed by Rishi Chhaya Purush. It will help to give the reader an adequate idea of the thoroughness with which the students' training was considered in the scheme of painting.

1. Bhut Chitra Kala Shastra,—science of painting the five elements, earth, water, fire atmosphere, and sky. This work defines the

quality of each element and explains their influence on creation and how it acts when it comes in contact with Nature's manifestations. It explains how forms take colour from these elements and the way the artist should make use of it for painting pictures.

2. "Shakti Chitra Kala Shastra",—this volume concerns itself with vegetable growth—"Jadd Vastu Sthaver Jungam". It deals with the life of all growth that has its root in the earth and how it takes its form from the earth and colour from the elements and explains the symbolism to be used for representing them for painting purpose.
3. "Yantra Chitra Kala Shastra",—prescribes rules, gives measurements and plans for all mechanical machines that move on land, water and sky and explains the way they should be painted.
4. "Loha Chitra Lekhana Shastra",—this volume contains information about engraving and etching on metal and advocates a particular kind of thorn to be used for etching.
5. "Pak Chitra Lekhana Shastra",—is a treatise which explains the science of making metals hard and soft with the help of camphor and other chemicals, and during the process of change to note the different colours it produces and make use of the variety of such colours for painting pictures.
6. "Bimba Paksharka Shastra",—is all about the art of miniature painting. According to this volume miniature painting was done on ivory, precious stones, semi-precious and ordinary stones and on nails. This volume gives a lengthy and detailed explanation of manufacturing, painting implements and colours; it also describes how to prepare a magnifying glass for the use of miniature painting.
7. "Chhaya Chitra Lekhana Shastra",—contains discourses on the subject of portrait painting and particularly discusses how to draw the likeness of a person by observing his shadow.
8. "Kesh Chitralkhna Shastra",—contains instructions how to conceive the character of a person and to draw his likeness by seeing his hair.

9. "Swar Chitra Lekhna Shastra",—is a volume that explains the science of painting the likeness of a person by hearing his voice.
10. "Nakh Chitra Lekhana Shastra",—contains information and instructions how to draw with your nails.
11. "Shalya Chitra Shastra",—is all about carving on bones.
12. This volume gives general information to the artist who is fully equipped for painting and the way he must proceed to set upon his profession, etc., etc.

Apart from this there is a work known as "Prapanchalahari" wherein in Maha Rishi Vashist mentions that in the regions known as "Dev-lokasthan"—Godly region, there are works written on the subject of art known as "Deva Silpa", "Yaksha Silpa", "Brahma Silpa" etc. but so far we only know them by their names.

Yajnavalki in his work called "Raj Tantra" mentions of works wherein explanation is given about the quality, use, appearance, colour, form, and sound, of electricity and rays of the sun, it further describes the nature of the clouds, the atmosphere and the sky; it discusses heat and power of the sun and tells you how to use all this knowledge for the purpose of painting. Mentions of similar subjects is to be found in "Nigantoo" dictionary called "Namarth Kalpa".

SIMPLIFICATION OF OLD LAWS

In the 3rd century A.D. Vatsyayana wrote a treatise simplifying the principles laid out in the "Chitralkhna" reducing the same to an elementary course by conforming only to six principles as necessary for painting.

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. "Rup Bheda" | — | Form and its why and wherefores. |
| 2. "Pramanam" | — | Proportion, measurement, etc. |
| 3. "Bhava" | — | Expression. |
| 4. "Lavanya Yojanam" | — | Grace and beauty. |
| 5. "Sadricyam" | — | Likeness. |
| 6. "Varnikabhanga" | — | Use of materials and implements. |

A special mention is made in one of the Shastras concerning details; it says that over-minuteness would be a sacrifice of labour; it is not for the artist to spend his time in displaying his knowledge or his skill; it also says that over-elaborated detail will destroy rather than heighten the beauty of the work. The artist is not one who makes, but one who finds.

The above information serves to confirm the contention that the art of painting has always been practised in India and was systematically studied by the student who regarded the laws and principles laid down by the lawgiver as sacred. The student considered the art of painting as Divine giving religious significance to all works produced with the aid of these laws.

Note:— Vatsyayana and his Six principles are mentioned by almost every writer on the subject of Indian art.

CHAPTER III

REFERENCE TO ART IN ANCIENT LITERATURE

This ideal was carried into action by the painters of the Aryan age and this is evident from references in the old sanskrit literature. Bhabhuti, the celebrated dramatist of India of the 6th century has written a drama called "Uttara Rama Charita." In this drama a whole scene is devoted to describing pictures painted on the walls of Rama's palace in Ayodhya. Lakshman invites Rama to come and look at the paintings.

"Come, my most noble brother, on these walls

Behold a skillful artist has portrayed

Your story as he learnt it late from me." *

The next scene of the drama is called "the contemplation of the pictures" and the dialogue between Rama, Sita and Lakshman is concerned only with the explanation and description of the paintings on the wall. In one instance this is how Sita describes a painting of Rama.

"I see my Lord, dark as the deep blue lotus in hue &c. &c.

In a Buddhist drama entitled "Nagananda" an incident is given of Prince Jimutavahana who is engaged on painting a portrait of Princess Malayavati—the object of his love. In Kalidas' Shakuntala King Dushyanta paints Shakuntala's portrait.

In another drama attributed to Kalidasa called "Malavikagnimitra" is an incident where the Queen Dharini gets the beautiful Malavika's portrait painted in the "Chitra-Shala".

The following is the description of Ravana's Palace as appears in the Griffiths translation of Ramayana.

* Willson's translation.

"Gay blooming creepers clothe the wall".

Green bowers where there are picture Halls," etc., etc.

A passage in "Nagananda" describes coloured earth used for painting in ancient India.

"Katha, Sarip, Sagara," mentions that "Nagara Swamin" was the painter Laureate of the Court of King Vikramaditya, and presented the king with pictures illustrating different types of female beauty.

It appears from available records that principles of "Silpa Shastra and Chitralekha Shastra" were systematically taught in Nalanda University and the artist had to go through a process of mental discipline and was to be instructed in yoga so that he could discriminate the essentials in form and appearance and could firmly fix the image he wished to produce in his mind's eye before he took the material to paint.

CHAPTER IV

Components and aspects of Indian Art

RELIGIOUS ART

In religious Indian art there is always an undertone of realism, the figures though real, look as if they belong to the unseen world. To the artist they were immortals that lived in their minds and dwelt in the other worlds. No Indian artist drew from nature. His power of imagination and visualisation were the means he used to observe nature; with this he could suggest the idea behind appearance and give the form a seeming reality, it was in the phenomenal world perceived by the senses where the artist saw true reality.

The whole endeavour therefore of the Indian religious artist was to get rid of the superficial appearance of things and penetrate that which stood behind the form. To occupy oneself with simple imitation of nature was considered idle and impious. "Sukracharya"* insists that to produce images of gods, spiritual contemplation is necessary. The spiritual vision is the best and truest standard and the artist should depend upon it and not upon visible objects. This sage after giving minute instructions, measurements of the proportions of figures says :— "In order that the form of an image be brought out fully and clearly upon the mind the artist must meditate and his success will be in proportion to his meditation. No other way not even seeing the object itself, will answer this purpose. Only those images are handsome, the measurement of which are in accordance with the rules of the Shastras". He further advises the artists that only the images of gods should be made, for they confer heaven and happiness; but the images of men and other

* a writer of the 6th century.

things shut the door of heaven and bring ill-fortune; therefore a misshapen image of god is better than the image of man however perfect the latter may be.

SYMBOLISM IN INDIAN ART

The code clearly suggests that every means had to be used to observe the laws of Chitra Lekhna Shashtra and to make it easy to follow them, use was made of symbolism and conventionalism. These resources enabled the artist to reveal the form instead of imitating them.

Those who read the language of nature and associate symbolism to express its meaning enhance the significance of its expression a thousand fold and enrich the function of created forms.

Symbolism consists in giving an explanation by certain formal signs that unfold the inner meaning of creation. It strips off all the unessentials of nature's forms keeping only that which is required for its recognition. It further summons the imaginative intensity of the beholder, so essential in understanding the expressive language the artist has demonstrated in formalised shapes. Thus the Indian artist does not paint forms as he sees them but expresses them in symbolic representations.

There are many works written on symbolism giving elaborate explanation of every sign that is to be used for pictorial purpose, in many cases it is explained by illustrations. The original idea of symbols coming into being had a deep motive being supported by philosophical and ethical ideas for the realization of nature's inner significance. Later it degenerated into all kinds of unintelligent and unconvincing explanation reducing it to a commonplace level by stripping off its higher motive and giving the same a religious significance which completely misguided the student.

YOGA IN INDIAN ART

In all branches of learning the ancient sages saw wisdom in introducing preliminary elements of yoga teaching and in the course of art

the knowledge of yoga was considered absolutely essential. The aim was to teach the student the art of concentration as only through meditation and concentration of thought the true picture of the subject in view can be conceived. Thus the study of yoga was a compulsory course for the student of painting and sculpture. Hinen Thsang,* the Chinese traveller and philosopher declared "that by meditation the living body could be etherialised and transported to one of the higher spiritual planes. In this way the artist conveyed himself to the Tusita heavens to observe the person of 'Buddha'. This confirms the opinion that the practice of yoga was established in the study of art in the Buddhist period; thus we find in Buddhist art, not a naturalistic Buddha but a mystical conception of Buddha's personality.

Hinen Thsang* makes mention of an interesting incident during his travels in India, of a cave he came across in the Pragbodhi mountains in the kingdom of Magadha. He says that when the cave was brightened with a light it exposed the figure of Tathagata on the wall of a shining white colour; bright were the divine lineaments of his face and he, Hinen Thsang, gazed in awe and holy reverence. The body of Buddha and his Kashaya robe were of a yellowish red colour, and from his knees upwards the distinguishing marks of his person were exceedingly glorious; but below the lotus throne on which he sat was slightly obscure, on the left and right of the figure and somewhat behind were visible the shadowy figures of Bodhisattvas and the holy priests surrounding them.

Here I will make one observation in case the motive of the introduction of Yoga is misunderstood in Buddhist art. The Buddhist who refused to accept the principles of yoga would hardly include this subject in their study. Buddhists fully believed in "Dhyana" meditation, which is the root idea of yoga. Hinen Thsang the greatest follower of Buddha made a pilgrimage to India to obtain knowledge of the yoga Shastras. The Buddhists of the Mahayana school fully recognised the yoga doctrines and made use of the same in their life and learning.

* Life of Hinen Thsang Book II

IMAGINATION IN INDIAN ART

For the complete understanding of the methods used to conceive a subject for painting or sculpture, it will be interesting to know how imagination was made use of by the Indian artist. The artist was also called magician (mantrin) who has to set aside personality to invoke the divinity desired to be painted. The artist would choose an appropriate moment for meditation and this was generally done after the formal ceremony of his prayer. The prayer being over and after giving offering of flowers to the deity, he would meditate on the original purity of created things, then bring to mind the four main principles of existence,—Love, Equality, Compassion and Sympathy so as to destroy any selfish motive that may have entered his mind. Then he would dwell on the purity of the first principle to attain identity with divinity when the divinity appears as in a dream. The artist then brings to mind the subject he chooses to paint and gets complete comprehension of the object he has in view. It is only when the mental image is thus defined in his mind's eye that the artist is ready to paint.

It will be seen that the artist who sought self-identification with divinity before he mentally conceived a form or composed a picture in his mind placed himself beyond the ordinary consciousness of inspiration. This is outside the characteristics of personal efforts, but the worship that provided the imagination brought a spontaneous flow of thought pictures, that amounted to the delight experienced by "Samadhi".

The Indian artist's conception of imagination is akin to religious ecstasy; it is realising of one's higher self and a revelation of our own higher nature that is essentially blissful. It is self-forgetfulness before the universal life, and self-realisation that involves unity with the Creator and the created.

This kind of imagination in art is far more satisfactory than just recording nature as we see it with our physical eyes. This art raises us to the plane of aesthetic contemplation and the spectator enters into a spiritual atmosphere in which the artist himself had been immersed

when he conceived the picture. It is this influence of ideal Indian art upon the spectator's own imagination which carries him as far as the artist himself had gone.

This is the fundamental principle through which Indian painting or Indian culture can be understood or judged. The painter is not an individual expressing personal whims but giving expressions to the ideals of beauty through the unchanging law of the Universe. The ideal is to him an actual experience that reveals true realities which he re-expresses in terms of present consciousness in his art.

RELIGION IN INDIAN ART

This is the advice of sage Sukracharya: "It is always commendable for the artist to draw the images of gods". He further says: "To make human figures is wrong, even unholy". With such stern dictates it is but natural that every attempt in art must be made towards representing Divine images; this aim he insists is the highest expression of art form and carries with it a spirit of religious idealism. In religious art nothing is represented for its own sake but for the sake of the Divine expressed through it; it is only when all forms are produced under these mental conditions that the artist attains religious ends, even if the artistic value of the work be small.

That art is essentially religious where the conscious aim of the artist is the representation of Divinity; though it is expressed in finite terms it has unconditioned and infinite significance. Here symbols are used as concrete attributes that serves an expressive art-speech so easily understood by those familiar with it. Their having being drawn from deep emotional experience is a proof that religious truths which enrich art have been gained. In all cases symbolism serves to define and to explain, the mysticism is expressed in definite forms, and here religion has helped the artist.

Indian religion has accepted art as it has accepted life in its entirety. It has never suffered from the narrowness of shutting out imagination

from its fold. It teaches you restraint in life and to search for reality beyond conditioned life. It tells you to accept art so that you may become more than man in the eyes of God.

From a religious point of view pictures and idols signify something which is not visible to all; therefore they have a certain invisible force in them.

In religious art the artist endows his picture or model with certain attributes and transforms his thoughts and ideas in his creation. Hence it ceases to be a mere picture or a material form. The work of art which breathes these thoughts and ideas reveal and radiate religious truths. There is always a purpose behind religious art, that is beyond matter and technique; behind this external expression stands the invisible energy of the artist risen intellectually above the forms painted or modelled. That is why a religious picture has uplifting effect on the spectator. Religious art is a creation of objective form with the main thought of serving humanity where the artist feels that his ideal is fulfilled.

BEAUTY IN ART

In painting and sculpture, beauty comes into existence by virtue of the form-idea introduced in matter or on surface by the artist. The form is not originally in the material; it is in the designer before even it enters stone or painting, creating beauty by an idea whose seat is in the source of that beauty i.e. mind which must naturally be more complete than any beauty of the external. Beauty produced in concrete form is diffused by entering into matter and is so much weaker than the original idea of beauty. Everything that reaches outward decreases in value so beauty is less beautiful when it enters material form. The prime cause must be more beautiful than the effect.

Art exhibited in material work derives from an art yet higher. Nature which creates things beautiful must be itself of a greater beauty. We are so blinded by the external that we are unable to discern the inward.

Knowing nothing of it we run after the outer, never realising that it is the inner that stirs us.

Because the original source of beauty dwells in the mind of the artist, beauty in art is not to be slighted. It is not a mere representation of idea from which it has derived its beauty; it is no bare reproduction of things seen, but it goes back to the Primal Nature of the beautiful from which the mind has derived beauty. Mind is the possessor of Primal Beauty and upon this beauty he moulds his figures and paints his pictures by apprehending what his art must take when he wishes to make that particular form manifest to sight by producing beauty where nature is lacking. Beauty without underlying thought is void of beauty, it is abandoned of beauty; for the more deeply beauty is drawn from ideas the more perfect it is, because beauty enters into painting or stone more intimately.

In an artist's production you first behold external expression but behind this stands that unique inner invisible energy which one cannot overlook. The inner energy of such works of art makes them rise intellectually above the earth. Such works of art are stepping stones leading to the idea that transcends form.

In Indian art the ideal of beauty must be a type impersonal and aloof. The laws insist upon this ideal as the true beauty. A painting that is executed according to the rules ~~and~~ laid down by the Shastras is beautiful and anything that differs from this canon will not satisfy the Indian.

CHAPTER V

UNRECORDED PERIOD IN INDIAN ART

We have enough material to feel convinced that laws for painting were established by the Aryan sages. We also have enough proofs to conclude that the art of painting was practised according to the laws given by the Rishis, but there are no surviving examples of paintings from the time the laws came into existence to the period when Buddhists recorded their own story on the walls of the Ajanta and Bagh caves.

In Ajanta and Bagh there are no elements to show that they mark the beginning of the art of painting. Even the preparation of the ground for painting shows that it was a highly cultivated science. In carrying out this work there is no hesitation either in selection, execution, or completion. It is so accomplished, so consistent in convention, so vivacious and varied in designs so beautiful in line and colour that we are compelled to conclude that painting was practised in India prior to the records kept in the caves of Ajanta and Bagh.

Historians and writers of the pre-Buddhist age make no reference to paintings in their writings or records. Even Ashoka does not mention the arts in his stone edicts. It is only when we refer to poetry and drama that we get proofs of the popularity of the art of painting. Fa-Hian and Hinen-Tsang the Chinese travellers freely describe paintings seen in different parts of India. They further mention having carried from India along with manuscripts and paintings, master painters to establish the art of painting in China. China thereafter practised painting by observing the laws of "Chitra-lekhana Shastra", and adopted the canons of painting as enumerated by "Vatsayana" to develop the art of painting in her midst.

Painting is a perishable art and examples on paper or cloth could hardly be expected to survive all these ages. During these centuries the country was disturbed with internal strife. Buildings and palaces of great magnitude have left no trace of their existence so it would be unnatural to expect to find works of art painted 3000 years ago.

CHAPTER VI

AJANTA AND INDIAN ART

Indian art is recognised by the paintings left to us in the caves of Ajanta and Bagh and it will be interesting to examine and find out if these works of art adhere to the laws and principles of "Chitralkhana Shastras" by "Chhaya Purush" of the ancient days.

It is evident that in the age of Vedic Rishis about 2000 B. C. or in the literary period of Hindoo Aryans that "Twastu Silpa" must have come into being. In the period immediately following the literary era the Hindoos had conquered and occupied the whole track of the country round the river Indus and its five tributaries. After consolidating the territory they moved down to the basin of the Ganges and Jamna and founded powerful kingdoms. After these successful wars, the spiritual and contemplative life of the early ages changed its character, as the conquest brought self-assertion, greed and an artificial civilization. Ideals of "Upanishad" were lost, the most-reasoned system of Kapila's "Sankhya" philosophy was deliberately thrown overboard, until Buddha introduced elements that were simple, world-embracing in sympathy and love for mankind which made his religion, the religion of the human race.

Freedom and liberty was denied by the Hindoos, who resented Goutam's interference; so every resource was resorted to by them to erase Buddhism from the world. "Mihirakula" the ruler of Sakla, west of Ravi, cruelly persecuted Buddhism and issued edicts to destroy all Buddhist priests and overthrow the law of Buddha so that no trace of his religion should remain. The King of Magadha was taken prisoner and humiliated, stupas and monasteries were destroyed and thousands of Buddhists killed on the banks of Indus. Maharakulu was the greatest persecutor of Buddhism.

Danger to Buddhism increased every day and the Brahmins destroyed all the literature they could find, or get possession of. That which was saved from destruction drifted to the south of India, where it was preserved by the Dravidians. Fa-Hian the Chinese traveller (400 A.D.) mentions "Vinaya Pitaka" and other works which were obtained in Ceylon and from the country Dravida. This proves conclusively that during this black age, when wars, persecution, caste system, superstition etc. were rampant Buddhist and other literature took refuge in the land of Dravida and it is from this place we are able to get a glimpse of the glory of India's ancient art.

Principles of "Chitralkhana Shastra" must have reached the Dravidian country about the time when Buddhism was driven out of the Aryan kingdom, other Aryan literature also drifted to the south possibly in incomplete condition. From these fragmentary records a system of the laws of paintings were established and practised. Thus the art of the south of India does not contain all the elements of "Chitralkhna Shastra" of the Aryans. Dravidian art is almost primitive as compared with the laws given by "Rishi Chhaya Purush".

The paintings of Ajanta caves were undertaken when the surrounding country was ruled by the Dravidian kings, 27 B. C. to 236 A.D. and the work was carried out by the command of the kings in co-operation with the Buddhist priests occupying the caves.

The painters of Ajanta were no beginners but were artists who must have studied the laws and conventions, enumerated in the Aryan Shastras, modified and adopted to suit the country and its people. These painters had reached an advanced stage of execution acquiring experience and knowledge of every technique necessary for carrying out so important a work as wall decorations.

A careful study of the paintings in the Ajanta caves will reveal that they are highly developed works of art, so accomplished in execution so consistent in symbolism and convention, that in no part of the world

can art be said to have reached this stage of development in the same period as seen in the paintings of Ajanta.

AJANTA PAINTINGS AND DRAVIDIAN ART

The art of Ajanta is Dravidian in character having assimilated the principles of "Chitralkhana Shastra" of the ancient Aryans. Dravidian art does not contain all the elements required by the laws of "Chitralkhana Shastra" nor does it express fully the deep philosophical and internal meaning of Nature's forms. Ajanta art is an inspired art, it is symbolic always suggesting something finer and more subtle than ordinary physical perfection, soaring higher to bring down to earth a vision of the infinite world, striving to realise something of the eternal which it has not reached.

The paintings in the caves of Ajanta were executed by Dravidian artists who may have come from Travancore, Cochin and the Malabar coast. The types chosen for painting the subjects are essentially of the South; the colour, costume, and jewellery is typically of that part of the country, and the manner of dress and the fantastic toilet of the women belongs to no other part of India. These figures remind you of men and women walking in the streets of Travancore even today. These characteristics are made further evident by their choice of musical instruments, the grouping of musical parties, and that peculiar pose and movement of the musicians so entirely of the south of India, that it leaves no doubt that Ajanta art is altogether Dravidian in character and execution. Further in cave no. 10 the painting illustrating the story of the Chandata elephant is an additional proof; this six tusked elephant shown in the picture is generally to be found in the forests of Travancore.

PAINTINGS OF AJANTA

The Ajanta paintings are full of delight. In selection of subject, they are vivacious, in design they are varied, in line and colour they are beautiful and the whole gives one that harmonious and pleasurable feeling one finds in the teaching of Buddha.

The art of Ajanta covers a period of nearly seven hundred years and has many phases in the execution of its work, conception and quality. In cave No. 1 the figure of Budhistiva expresses the highest stage of development in the art of painting in Ajanta. This figure embodies the best principles of "Chitralkhana Shastra" and from this painting we are able to know definitely that the Ajanta painters were instructed in the principles of philosophy and had complete knowledge of the laws of Indian painting.

The painting of this particular figure is in the style that can be rightly called grand. It eliminates all the un-essentials in Nature, and embodies that symbolism and convention which avoids unintelligent and faulty realism. Apart from these surface qualities it expresses that deep philosophical significance which reveals higher truths conditioned by the experience called "the unknown vision". Conception of such ideas arrive from outside the ordinary consciousness identical with the divine ideal, and though the artist suggests his art forms in terms of appearance, this is of the phenomenal world. It is an escape from limitation, having achieved realisation of unity with the absolute Being. This quality is the predominating expression in this Budhistiva who though bound in worldly pain, feels the perfect bliss that is beyond the appearance of things. (*Plate I*).

In this painting the artist has achieved this ideal in a few perfect lines that are sure and masterly, the one clear unbroken line of the eyebrows that varies in places is almost miraculous in execution; the eyes and the outline of the head are no less marvellous and the entire work opens an unseen vision. The force of its appeal is strengthened by the association of artistic, emotional and religious ideas. They are a vital expression of the race and mind, and as great art, would live on to give the beholder the inner meaning of its existence.

In cave No. 17 is a painting 10'-3" by 10'-3" illustrating "Chandanta Jataka." The scene is in the pavillion of a royal palace. At the sight of

elephant tusks brought in her presence by a servant the queen is stricken with grief, as she imagines it is the death of the elephant king and faints in her husband's arms. The painting is thoughtfully composed and the figures so arranged as to give the scene the necessary commotion and bustle as perceived on such occasions. Each figure in the picture spontaneously falls into the group and the attendants faces show an earnest desire to revive the Queen with every means at their disposal. One of the attendants is fanning the Queen's feet with a lotus flower that is in her hand. The grouping of the subject is intelligently worked out and the motive of the picture is apparent to the spectator. The mastery of the unbroken line is strikingly executed and the arrangement of the colour scheme is harmoniously worked out. The type and costumes chosen for the picture are essentially of the south of India. (Plate II).

On the right of this painting is a large wall space devoted to a similar subject "Chandanta Jataka." This picture shows several elephants with a white elephant prominently occupying the important place, amidst a verity of foliage. Amongst the foliage is a "Palasa" (flame of the forest) tree in bloom with a screw pine entwining the tree and a number of black ants crawling on its stem. The scarlet flowers and the dark green velvety calyx is so beautifully painted and drawn that you see that by a conscious intellectual effort the conventionalised flower and the tree is expressing itself and making manifest the reason for its coming into being. The flower has meant so much to the artist that he has a clear memory picture of the essential character of the tree before he painted the same on the wall. This kind of decorative art, intimately related to the artist's own experience, is left to us as crystallized tradition, representing race conception, and not the idea of one single artist of a single period. (Plate III).

Cave No. 10 almost entirely devoted to the legend of "Chandanta Jataka" is nearly 200 feet long and 11'-6" high wall space is covered with painting. The story is connectedly told in pictures with such variety of

PLATE NO. I,



HEAD OF BUDHISTIVA
Cave No. 1 Ajanta.

By courtesy of the late E. B. Havel.

PLATE NO. II.



CHANDANTA JATAKA
Cave No. XVII. Ajanta.

From Ajanta by John Griffiths.

PLATE NO. III.



*PALASA—Flame of the Forest
Cave No. XVII Ajanta.*

From Ajanta by John Griffiths.

PLATE NO. IV.



THE CHANDANTA ELEPHANT
Cave No. X Ajanta.

From Ajanta by John Griffiths.

interest that only the artist's love of religion and personal devotion to art could achieve this end. Great painters of such pictures have mental vision in their control which they could define and hold in art forms. It is here that the relation between the Indian worshipper and the Indian artist becomes one.

The painting of elephants in this cave is remarkable in execution and in its certainty of drawing it is so masterly that nowhere I have seen a representation of elephants that shows the elegance and dignity of the animal, besides giving full impression of his bulk. There is no light and shade, yet it has the solidity required to give the animal a living appearance. (Plate IV)

In cave No. 17 is a painting that shows a lady of rank at her toilet. This picture is an embodiment of richness both in subject matter and colour. The chief figure, probably a princess draped and bejewelled, is concerned with finishing her toilet, two maids and a dwarf are in attendance and look absorbed and lost in the service of their mistress.

The first thing that strikes one is the spontaneous effect of the artist's genius in which psychological interests are closely knit and ruled by formal consideration. The picture is composed so intelligently and thoughtfully as to leave no space wasted. There is nothing haphazard or anything left to chance, and you feel that a complete idea of the subject was in the artist's mind when he composed the picture. The main figure is given due prominence with dignity and full feminine grace. The maid servant on the right of the princess automatically falls into such a graceful and natural attitude that it is a joy to behold.

With the mastery of line and colour of this painting, it seems odd that the feet should be so badly drawn and painted. The reason becomes obvious when you see the original painting on the wall. I examined the original and discovered that the lower portion had been damaged and someone who had no authority nor knowledge of painting repaired the

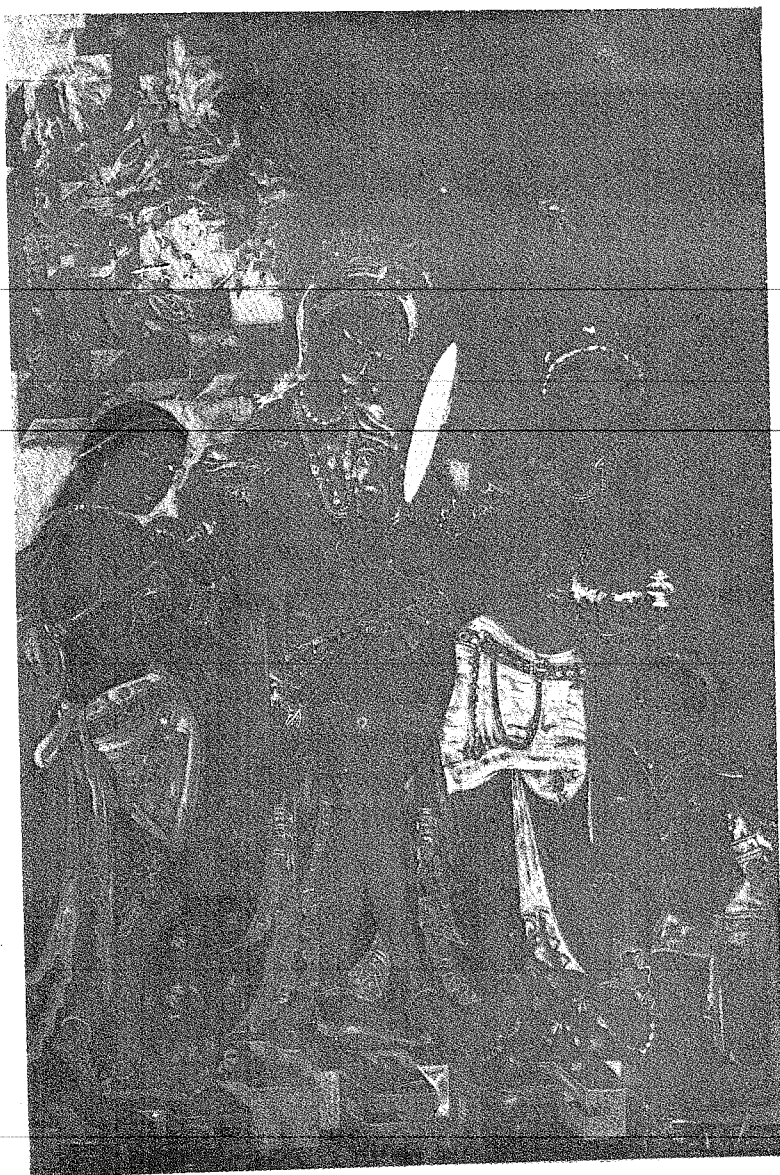
damage leaving the work disfigured. This must have happened long after the original was completed. A similar calamity has occurred in the case of the great figure of Budhistiva in cave No. 1. The lower portion of this painting must have given way with the result that in repairing the damage a large part of this picture has been repainted and ruined. Fortunately, the head and right hand that are untouched speak for themselves. The tendency of repairing old paintings is predominant even today and so many beautiful works of art of the Moghul period have met with similar fate. (Plate V).

In cave No. 17 are several types of decorations carried out on doorways and columns; The variety of motifs used for decoration in Ajanta shows the power of imagination of the artist who paints what moves him. This particular character is not limited to subject pictures but everything he wishes to produce and this phase persists throughout his work the illustration reproduced will give an adequate idea of such wall spaces filled by the artist. (Plate VI).

The ornamental art of the Ajanta caves is so interesting and instructive that no painters in any part of the world have produced such variety in designs and colour as you find here. Wherever you glance change of design prevails and repetition rarely occurs even in the smallest detail. The work is so full of play and fancy that the artist never seems at a loss for ideas and patterns and the lotus flower is used in a way as to give the ornamentation an effect that is unsurpassed in beauty and richness. In these ornamentations, convention and symbolism are brought into such delightful combination as to enhance the flow of line and bring into prominence the delicacy and beauty of colour and the fertility of design, and all this is done with such natural ease that gives it the stamp of being the greatest decorative achievement in the whole world. (Plates VII, VIII, IX).

To conclude observations on these remarkable cave paintings we may say that they have so many phases in its artistic career and a variety of special interests, that it takes the character of a national art.

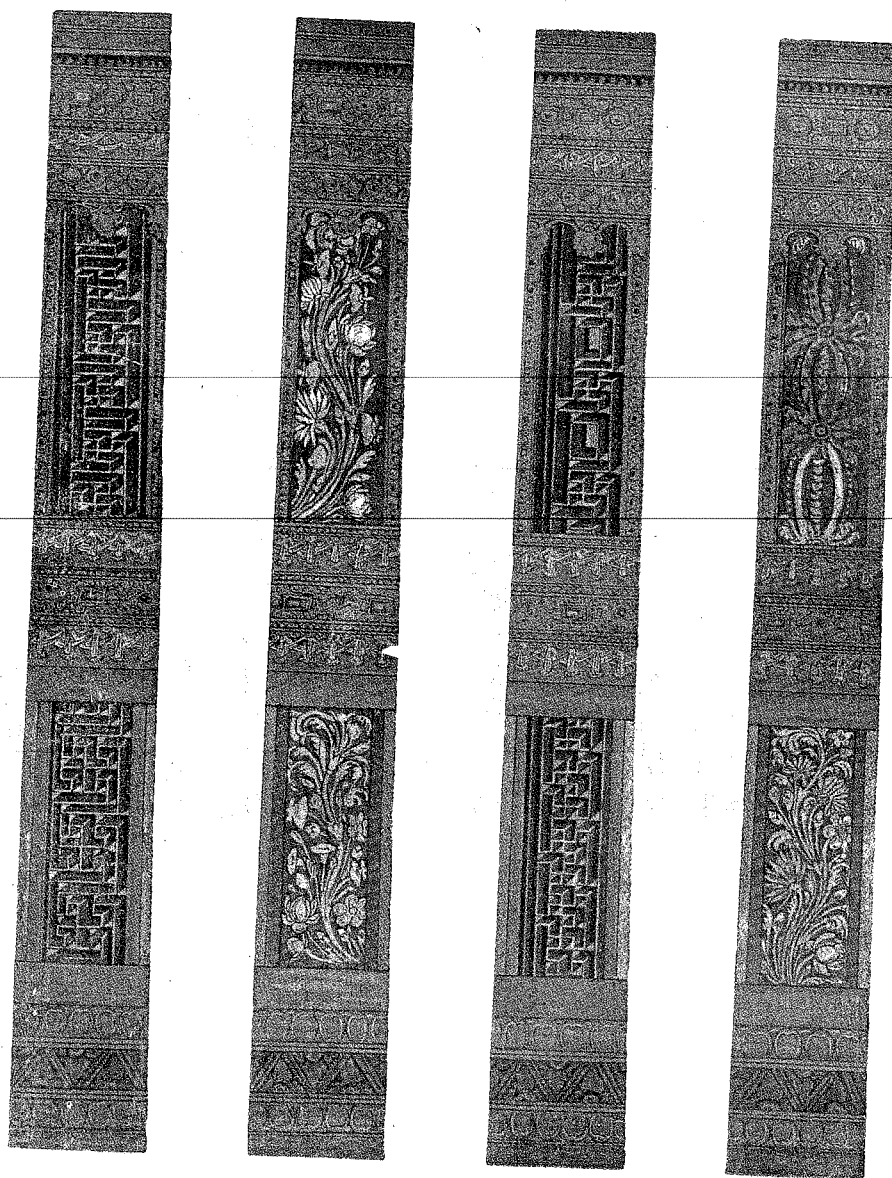
PLATE NO. V.



A LADY OF RANK
Cave No. XVII Ajanta.

From Ajanta by John Griffiths.

PLATE NO. VI.



PANNELS FROM PILLARS
Cave No. XVII.

From Ajanta by John Griffiths.

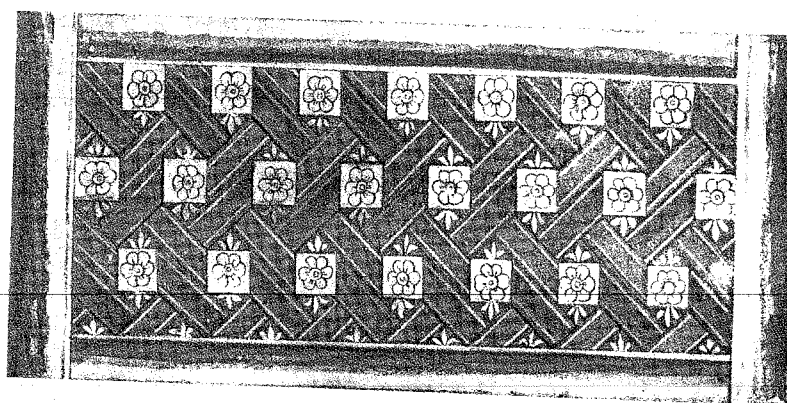
PLATE NO. VII.



PANNEL ON CEILING
Cave No. 1 Ajanta.

From Ajanta by John Griffiths.

PLATE NO. VIII.



PANNELS ON CEILING
Cave No. 1 Ajanta.

From Ajanta by John Griffiths.

FAULTS IN THE PAINTINGS OF AJANTA

In the preceding chapter I have dwelt only on examples which represent the best painting in the Ajanta caves and those that approach to some extent nearer the ideal of "Chitralkhana Shastra". In this chapter my observations will be concerned with the paintings of Ajanta as a whole, its faults, achievements, and its failure to reach the standard as set forth in the laws given by the Aryan Rishis.

It is evident that the general plan of the paintings on the walls in the caves of Ajanta were carried out by the group of artists from the source of India with a master painter to guide his pupils. This master painter had complete knowledge of the art of painting on the wall, the preparation of wall surfaces, the designing all of which appear from the very initial stage to be the work of a professional. The use of colour and the handling of material for wall painting is far from primary but the work was undertaken by an artist who had complete knowledge and experience of this science. Amongst the group of artists working in Ajanta there is evidence of young painters who were beginners and some advanced in the study of painting, as the quality of work so varies as to establish the fact, that Students of various qualifications were engaged in the task. In some cases the drawing of figures and the handling of colour is so clumsy, unintelligent and meaningless that it is difficult to understand its presence. In other cases everything is sacrificed to convention and symbolism, without realising its introduction in the art of painting. How can a wrong and distorted drawing be accepted as a work of art by the laws of "Chitralkhna Shastra" when the canons clearly mention that the artist should be able to draw so perfectly as to get the likeness of a person by observing his shadow, and this fact is proved by the incident quoted below :—

"It is related that during the lifetime of Buddha when Ajanta Satru desired a portrait of the master, he allowed his shadow to fall on a piece of cloth and this was utilized to paint his portrait."

Ajanta painting being Dravidian in character it makes it difficult to judge as to which particular law had governed them. None of the principles of "Chitralkhana Shastra" are applicable in this case. There is very little in this art which can be understood without knowing the motive of the artist. At the first impression it appears to the uninitiated that the idea which underlies its construction has no particular expression. He will further feel that in the general scheme it lacks monumental grandeur and divine significance. Its ideas seem to have sprung up haphazard like the arm of a coral reef and the ornamentation resembles a wild growth; the general effect, whatever the attempt may be, is discerned with difficulty. It all seems like an accidental product of superfluity.

To those who understand the fundamental motive of the mind of the artist who produced the works of Ajanta there is a profound significance in this art; to this man it is the highest expressions of physical imagination, in these forms are materialised fundamental instincts in a manner no other people could reveal. The art of the Dravidians signifies the rebirth of the unintellectualised forces of life. Here hardly anything is subject to ordinary reason and we rob them of their nature in trying to rationalise them. This peculiarity is expressed with a unique degree of truth in the Ajanta paintings. Ajanta art though inefficient in monumental concept has mastery in working out the general planning of the details.

BAGH CAVE PAINTINGS

The Bagh cave paintings are a continuation of Ajanta and the same mind appears to have been at work here utilising the same technique, colour, manner and convention which guided the artist at Ajanta.

It appears that after completing their mission in Ajanta a group of artists drifted to Bagh ^{as} at the existence of these caves were known to the priests and painters of Ajanta.

About the time the Ajanta work was completed, Buddhist influence in this part of India had almost come to an end. This gave the painters

PLATE NO. IX.



PANNEL ON CEILING
Cave No. I Ajanta.

From Ajanta by John Griffiths.

PLATE NO. X.



GRIEF
Cave No. IV Bagh.

By Courtesy Govt. of Gwalior.

and designers full freedom in the choice of their subjects and convention to be used, nor were they bound to obey any religious restrictions from the priests. From the subjects chosen it is clear that they are not influenced by Buddhism or its teachings but represent scenes that the artist may have noticed in the usual way occurring in that part of the country. Though the subject matter is local, the types and characters chosen to represent the subject are the same as were adopted in carrying out the paintings at Ajanta.

Very little remains to be seen in the Bagh caves but whatever is left to us shows a unique achievement in the sphere of art. In conception it is grand, in treatment it is free, and in line and colour its boldness surpasses anything an artist has ever achieved. In Bagh the artist was the master free from all restrictions of religious law, and suggestions that the priests had to make; they had no one to question their achievement nor did they have to wait for anyone's approval. This freedom helped the artist to expand his imaginative quality and technical ability with the result that the works produced are of such quality that leaves one wondering to what heights an artist can reach when understanding and opportunity are combined. (*Plate X*).

CHAPTER VII

MEDIEVAL PERIOD

From A. D. 700 to A. D. 1600 no painting or sculpture of any value has come to light. Some writers have laid great stress on the illustrations of Jain manuscripts and painted panels supposed to have been executed during the period as works of art. On examining these paintings you will discover that no element of art enters these paintings and none of the rules of convention or principle are seen in its conception, nor do they display art technique of any value. It is just a product of something that contains no idea, nor does it enfold any serious motive that underlie these productions. In these pictures there is no suggestion of "free mental creations" they reflect rather immature mental development. These art-forms are totally unintelligent without any unity in thought and the subject painted, they are a coloured chaos not governed by any artistic consideration and are absolutely without significance. They are without form, without selfcontrol following blind impulse changing at will; they do not express any reason or mood, nor do they submit to any limitation except the boundaries of their own fate.

Anything that is termed art must create something great in circumstances where the forces of imagination strive to ennoble Nature's forms and not reduce them to something merely unusual. Every artistic product reveals in its type elements which define the meaning of creation reasonably and without contradiction in its purpose. The essential is transformed in this process which becomes a positive element and the creation assumes a unique magnificence both in form and colour that delights the soul of the spectator. This art establishes a connection with ultimate reality which is known and understood only by mystic intuition. (Plates XI, XII).

PLATE NO. XI.



DURMATI

*By Courtesy Department of
Archaeology, Hyderabad.*

PLATE NO. XII.



SAMA

By Courtesy Department of
Archaeology, Hyderabad.

CHAPTER VIII

INDIAN ART DURING THE MOGHULS

We now come to that period of Indian art which changed the very character of Indian painting and here again we suffer for want of a connecting thread that is not forthcoming. From the time the cave painting came to an end till the introduction of painting by the Moghuls in India there is nothing of any artistic value on record to show how the country was behaving towards this culture.

It is an ironical fact that up to recent time very little was known to the Indian himself of his own art and culture prior to the date of the Mohamedan conquest. The Hindu period was almost a blank to him; he could tell who built the Taj Mahal without having the faintest notion when the caves of Ajanta were excavated and painted, when the rediscovery of the cave paintings were made no correct and authentic information could be gathered from him. Everything lay buried under the ruins of this own culture till European scholars brought to light this brilliant chapter of the history of human advancement.

During their reign the Mohamedan rulers patronised and encouraged all culture that came to light without any restriction; and along with other arts, painting became a court accomplishment; religious scruples had no place where painting and music was concerned and the Moghuls carried on the tradition of learning derived from India along with their own learning that was brought from Persia.

The paintings produced in the time of the Moghuls are an assimilation of Hindu sentiment and Muslim ideas and whatever be the scale of the work produced, characteristics of both were expressed in the picture. The common feature of both arts was the adoption of line, and this parti-

cular quality made it easy to carry on their work without interfering with their own mental conception.

Moguls entered India as a highly civilised and refined people; they were sympathetic to all cultures being themselves a community of rationalists, poets and mystic philosophers. Islam had enjoined on its followers that their chief aim should be search of knowledge and India speedily influenced them by providing every kind of knowledge to which they readily responded. Being religiously of a democratic creed they treated the Hindus as their equals in every way and in all branches of learning elevating them to a rank and position they had not enjoyed under their own Hindu Kings. The association of the Mogul with their newly adopted brethren was congenial and created an atmosphere that was generous. The aesthetic temperament soon brought confidence amongst the Hindus, who enthusiastically responded to the conditions created by their masters, bringing mutual confidence necessary for the peace and progress of the nation.

When the Moguls settled down in their new home free from wars and state anxiety, poets, philosophers and artists made their appearance from their original home Persia, where art, poetry and philosophy had already reached a dominating height. Behzad was looked upon with that respect few artists of the world could command. Philosophers like Rumi, and Jami and poets like Hafiz and Sadi were Persia's imperishable lights; with this cultural stream flowing into their veins the Moguls were anxious to continue their love for higher arts, now that wealth and opportunity had presented itself on Indian soil. Painters and paintings were invited to their courts and it was soon discovered that Hindoo response to the art introduced by the Mogul was complete. The Hindu effort was revered by the Emperors who rewarded the artist by taking them under their patronage and raised them to the dignity of court painters. From this favourable beginning the art of painting developed under the Moguls and flourished under their patronage becoming the art of the court. Aesthetic nature found its expression and an art revival took its root in India.

Revival of arts, literature and crafts brought about by the Moguls has given India an enviable cultural position in the world. Their keen aesthetic interest was a source of inspiration to the artists, and though aliens in India they became completely one with the people and regarded themselves as an integral part of the country. Though Persian artists first introduced their works in the Mogul courts Hindu genius was fully recognised and their skill immediately utilised and Hindu artists inspired by such encouragement were ready to profit by Persian artists experience and the fusion of the two ideals was the foundation of Mogul painting.

Mogul painting although it derived its expression and method from Persia had become so transformed in the hands of Indian painters as to become a distinct art of India striking an entirely different note. Personal interest was the chief inspiration that reflected in their work which was developed, encouraged and maintained by the Mogul Emperors. Hindus and Muslims both worked on an equal basis and were honoured according to the merit of their work. Each had full freedom to work out his own scheme and to paint as his mental ability allowed. There was no restriction of any kind, as some imagine, and much was left to the power of and imagination of the artist. The Emperors certainly suggested themes but never dictated them.

Mogul art looks like Persian in its superficial adaptation, such as its miniature like size, the method of mounting, its illustrative character, but it has hardly much in common in its mental conception with Persian art. It is free from Persian conventionalism and the Persian manner of decorative arrangement. Persian art is so distinct. Mogul art assumes an individual character, the style is independent and manner and technique distinctive having an individuality entirely its own, though a certain amount of similarity in the treatment of trees and flowers is to be found in Mogul painting. It displays nature in a manner which fully reflects complete absorption of the Indian atmosphere.

Mogul painting is distinctive and resembles no other existing art. It has developed a power of expression that was beyond the range of

Persian painters, it introduces surface modelling and a suggestion of light and shade without destroying its decorative quality with remarkable success. It treats details as a part of the scheme, and painting of the landscapes reveals close knowledge of nature. Trees, flowers and mountains are treated with a definite understanding of plains, dimensions and perspective. *Plate (XIII).*

With the exception of religious themes there is not a subject which the painters of the Mogul period did not handle, and in most cases the subject was given by their patrons. Wherever the painting had public interest, such as a Durbar, a procession or the like, its treatment was on a grand scale. King Faruksyar's journey to Kashmir, Durbar of Shahajan, the dance of dervishes are examples of magnificent spectacle. No painter of any other country has been so successful as the Mogul painters have in representing the grandeur and the dignity of such subjects. In Faruksiyar's journey to Kashmir, the dignity of the horse the king is riding on, the officials and attendants, each a portrait—with innumerable figures and elephants in the background is nothing short of a great work of art.

The greatest achievement of the Mogul art was its portraiture. In this branch they reach a level rarely achieved by any known painter of the world. Mogul portraits are realistic in the sense that you recognise the person painted, in his likeness you can read the life and character of the sitter. Besides this realisation of the individual painted, you see that the artist has intelligently revealed in his work the innate personality with his deeds stamped on his expression. All these qualities reveal themselves in the face of the sitter and the Mogul painter experienced in the knowledge of human nature presented it in his work with that sureness and subtlty of line which alone can give such profound results as you find in Mogul portraiture. (*Plate XIV a*).

Apart from these characterisation there is a great interest in its technical qualities. The hardly noticeable suggestion of light and shade, the slight and subtle modelling to give solidarity without destroying its decorative quality is a unique performance raising the standard of art to

PLATE NO. XIII



JAHANGIR
By Manohar

By Courtesy Oxford University Press.

PLATE NO. XIV.



By Courtesy Oxford University Press. *ASAD KHAN*

By c

PLATE NO. XIV A.



KAMBAKSHH
Son of Aurangzeb.

By courtesy Oxford University Press.

the highest peak. This kind of art is not limited to time or space but maintains its level in whichever light or place it is seen nor can it suffer in any way from time and environment. This art though termed Mogul is universal.

The subject pictures, particularly those where the Emperor is represented as taking part in the scene besides representing a certain incident are portrait galleries themselves. Every figure is a likeness of someone associated with the Court and you can recognise the person, even the secondary figures are representatives of the particular attendants keepers or chobdars. Here the artist has to consider the subjects the composition and the likeness of each figure. This is a test of the ready ability of the artist.

Very little attention is paid to the remarkable painting of different types of materials used in the Mogul period. The rich brocades, the diaphonous draperies, the various types of transparent garments, the jewellery, each is painted with such knowledge and accuracy that the distinction in different mulmul is noticed, it is so beautiful in execution that it almost amounts to a portrait of the garment painted.

The painter of the Mogul miniatures besides being a man of the world had a philosopher's attitude towards nature. He saw everything from the point of view of its appearance as well as that unknown force which formed the shape and character of the object and in the general scheme of painting he used actuality in the same proportion as convention and symbolism. He never overlooked form, nor did he sacrifice the deeper attitude towards nature for the sake of the form. The balance of these two important factors is exquisite in Mogul art, and it is doubtful if any painter has maintained that greatness in his work as the Indian painter in the time of the great Moguls.

The Mogul painting though miniature in size is large in conception and this quality is enhanced when you enlarge the miniature to the actual size of the subject painted. When these images are thrown on the wall

by means of a lantern, the enlargement exposes the noble qualities that can only be conceived by one who has not only studied his subject, but has sympathetically understood the subject so as to see not only its present but past, and get a glimpse of its future.

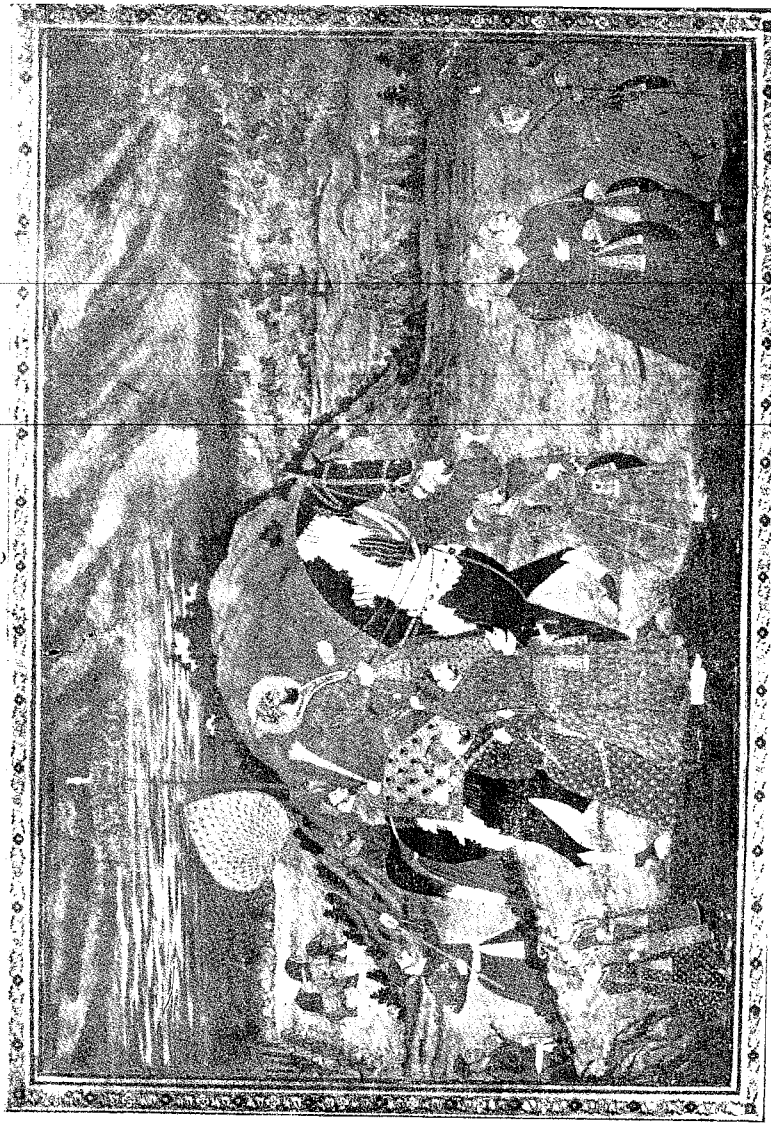
Portrait "Asad Khan"—

One who knows the life achievements and disappointments of this remarkable man will realise the greatness of this portrait. In drawing, it surpasses everything that has been achieved in a portrait, as a character study there is nothing to be desired, for it expresses that sternness needed during his career which gave Asad Khan the success in his exploits during his office at the Mogul court. In simplicity of treatment it has reached the greatest height, even the best masters will be afraid to exhibit this courage. There is not extra line and not a single necessary detail is wanting. In conception it is big having the dignity and grandeur of the highest achievement in art. Such portraits are rare; they are the works of a giant mind whose knowledge of art and nature is so profound that the artist is able to reduce everything to essentials without sacrificing anything of its appearance. A work so large in conception and so delicate in technique can only be the outcome of a deep philosophical mind whose love for nature was deep and whose understanding profound. Plate XIV.

"Farruksiyar's journey to Kashmir."

The Mogul painters recognised the bond between all living things and this unity of life was an inspiration to the artist, and that he was capable of such piercing intuition makes him a profoundly interesting character. The introduction of animals in Farrukh—Siyars journey to Kashmere makes the subject difficult to handle and the artist has treated it in grand style. The dignity of the horse and the way he carries the king is a masterpiece. King Farrukh-Siyar was not of the same intellectual order as Akbar or Babar yet the dignity in vanity is stamped on the king's features. The figures in the foreground forming the King's retinue are all portraits of his courtiers and attendants and the three young boys following are the pages. In the composition, the King on horse-

PLATE NO. XV.



FARRUKH SIYAR'S JOURNEY TO KASHMIR.

From Baroda Collection.

PLATE NO. XVI.



ELEPHANT BAITING
Emperor Shaha Jahan Watching.

From Baroda Collection.

back is prominently placed in the centre and the rest are fitted in to make an impressive group of magnificence. The drawing in the picture is exquisite even to the last detail and the movement so remarkable that you actually feel that the procession is moving in front of you. The enormous crowd in the distance with its elephants and horses and surrounded by the army gives full grandeur to the scene.

There are three different groups in the scene, The King and his party form the main group in front. The second with the prince carried in a palanquin leading the zanana on several elephants with purdah arrangements on them is the central group and far beyond in the distance is the whole army with elephants and horses in uncountable numbers. The landscape is intelligently worked out but the sky seems as if it had been interfered with by some one with a view to repairing the damage of that portion which may have suffered through bad handling and one has to take it for what it is. The world here is seen in a romantic aspect animals admitted amongst human beings and this element is very well represented in the picture. Here the artist has identified his non-human feelings with the world unattached to humanity and has an exquisite vision of chosen beauties. (Plate XV).

CHAPTER IX

SCHOOL OF PAINTINGS

To bring about distinction in art, those interested communally, nationally, or commercially divided Mogul art into two separate units and called the other Rajput, thus making it Muslim and Hindu. Some thought that this was not enough since India had so many castes and creeds that introduction of such differences were necessary, so we have Jaipur, Kangra, Pahari, Rajastani, Deccani, Jain, Kashmiri, Delhi, Lucknow, and many more are in contemplation. The dealers and unauthorised writers are always searching and inventing new names for enticing collectors and customers whose desire for possession has deprived them of their knowledge of art and who have become an easy prey to such inventors.

While referring to different names given to Mogul painting, as an example, I will refer to only one branch of the several invented names, the "Deccani School" which came into prominence by a distinguished looking publication brought out by the India Society in London. The written matter to this publication was provided by one who is not authorised to express an opinion on art much less Indian art. For this publication lavish funds were provided by the Nizam's Government, Hyderabad, Deccan, and India Society supplied the propaganda.

In the Mogul period Deccan was a pass that linked south to the north of India, and the district being a mountainous country was inhabited by raiders and marauders. Anything that has been handed down to us in the shape of painting from Deccan, are works of art that were either robbed from the Mogul courts or looted in the raids and I may mention that the painting described above "Farruksiyyar's journey to Kashmir" was one of the thousands brought into Deccan in the loot by the Peshwas.

Governors and usurpers of the Mogul Kings who established their own power by betraying the confidence of their masters invited painters and artisans to do work for them, as soon as they found themselves safely settled in their newly established kingdoms. Response to such invitations was accorded only by indifferent painters from Jaipur, Delhi and Lucknow who executed third rate work for their patrons. Further, copies of Mogul paintings were made by still lesser men who learnt under Mogul painters working in Deccan at the time. All such work that you find in the Deccan country is now termed "Deccani Art". No effort is needed to see in the picture "Procession of Abdullah Qutb Shah" (Collection of the late Sir Akbar Hydari) that the painting is entirely late Mogul. The technique, the colour scheme, the manner of execution, type of costume adopted in the picture is enough to show that it does not have the faintest atmosphere, influence or sentiment of Deccan and in all probability the picture was painted in Rajputana and brought over to Deccan to be sold to Qutb Shah whose procession it represents.

This will show that all miniature painting though different in manner and execution according to the ability of the individual painter, is Mogul art, and it is that art which came into being by the interest, effort and encouragement given by the Mogul Emperors. Some of the best paintings of the Mogul period though painted by Hindoo artists does not become Hindoo art or the illustration of Mahabharata painted by the Persians become Persian art. In the same manner the painting of a religious subject does not make a picture spiritual nor the depicting of everyday life necessarily be considered material. Most of the writers have erred in considering that Hindoo art is "spiritual and symbolic" while Mogul is "Material and exotic." This expression is used without any regard to the quality of the picture.

Religious dictates caused Hindoo painters to represent religious ideals as their main objective, and to express the sentiment of their traditional legends. The Hindu painter's attempt was to appeal to human feeling so that the spectator should also become exalted and absorbed in religious

ideas. This feeling elevated the individual into a higher sphere and covered a larger field of imaginative scope; thus he produced innumerable aspects interwoven with religious, traditional and popular life. The Hindoo painter's ambition did not go beyond his work. He worshipped his profession next to his god and was content to produce his best efforts in all his undertaking. The Hindoo painter is a simple craftsman intent on living in his beliefs, customs and domestic life, producing artistic work that helped to strengthen his religious ideas.

It is assumed by some writers that the Mogul type of pictures painted by the Hindoos in Rajputana demonstrate a manner as having descended directly from Ajanta, some have gone so far as to assert that the technique of Mogul painting was adopted from the Rajput painters and this is argued in face of the fact that no painting of any kind is in evidence from the time Ajanta concluded its work till the Moguls introduced the Persian miniature painting in India. Pictures that exist from the Hindoo brush are only those that were painted in the time of the Moguls and after, and it is definite that there is no such thing as Rajput or any other school that existed, as brought forward by many writers on the subject of Indian art. Here I wish to emphasize the fact that this type of miniature painting is definitely Mogul art and it will be wrong to term it anything different.

Patronage of the kind given by the Mogul Emperors and the interest evinced by them in art is unknown in any cultural history of humanity and short lived as it was, it was a glorious period for Indian art.

It is but natural that the Hindoos should express sentiment that is different from the Muslims, and for this very reason Mogul art is extremely interesting. When Mogul patronage ceased the art of painting fell into decay. Those still in possession of their talent carried on their profession and produced work of the Mogul type, drifting in the direction wherever they could sell, their art becoming mechanically strained and debased, completely losing its characteristics, strength and style, gradually fell to copying those Mogul paintings that were available till the advent of British rule when it dropped to the lowest depth becoming altogether lost to the country.

lived,
plain:
gradu
The a
intere
took t
motive

It
painter
appear
and le
was no
approv
that art
and les
disappe

Mu
in its co
artist ha
delicate
charm se
exaltatio
Mogul n

It ha
art that
Ajanta ar
of Hindu
study the
from each
painters v

Many Hindoo painters drifted to the place where they originally lived, some sought patronage of small feudatory chiefs in far off hills and plains of Hindustan, carrying on the tradition of the Mogul miniature gradually losing strength and power maintained in the Mogul painting. The artistic impulse that had found expression fostered by the personal interest taken by the Mogul Emperors was lost. Religion as subject matter took the place of art, inspiration disappeared taking with it the higher motive that the artists expressed in their earlier art.

It was during this period that painting carried on by the Hindoo painters produced works imprinted with their own personality, paintings appeared featuring mythological, ritual and religious subjects. Myths and legends were represented by human and superhuman forms. There was no competition, nor were there any Mogul Emperors to show their approval or reject the same if it did not keep its standard, with the result that art declined, refined qualities of the earlier work gave way to harder and less sympathetic treatment and it only needed time for its complete disappearance from the field of art.

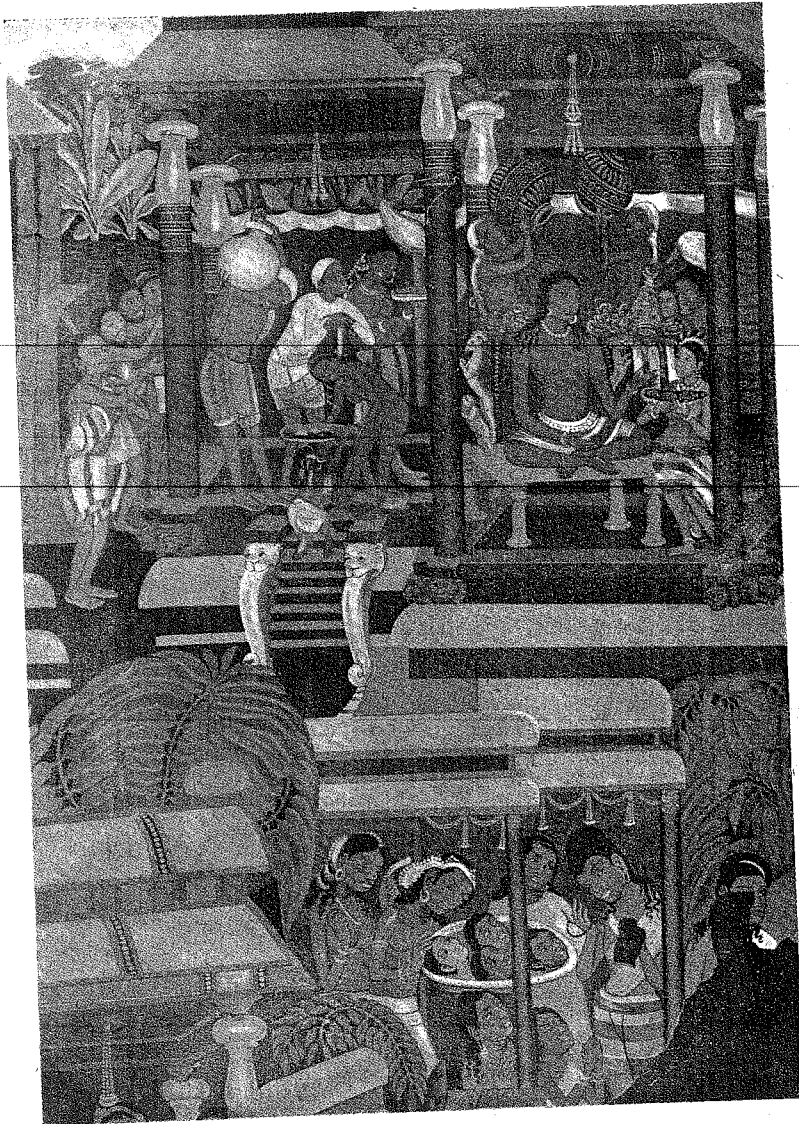
Miniature painting by Hindoos, at its best shows great beauty of line in its conventional treatment, it had wider scope in imagination and the artist had complete freedom to express his personality. It is full of delicate feeling and the representation of womanhood has a supreme charm seldom seen in any work of art. It further expresses a feeling of exaltation that is almost spiritual, but it lacks strength and vigour of the Mogul nor does it show that vitality the Mogul miniatures display.

It has been maintained by almost every writer on the subject of Indian art that miniatures painted by Hindoo painters embody the principle of Ajanta and carry out the tradition and sentiment of the ancient law givers of Hindustan; such statements will not bear out the test if the writer will study the paintings of Ajanta and Bagh caves. The two are so apart from each other that not even a shade of Ajanta has entered the Rajput painters work. They differ in every respect and one feels convinced that

the Hindoo painters of the Mogul period were not even aware of the existence of the cave paintings of Ajanta.

The painters of Ajanta had a different ideal and saw everything on a larger scale. The spaces they decorated with subject matter on the walls show nothing of that pretty pleasing effect which the Rajput miniatures betray, but are stately, impressive and superb, and in beauty of line and form they are unrivalled. The Rajput drawings are dainty and graceful but the Ajanta paintings while embodying these aesthetic qualities are forceful, spontaneous and unrestrained. Ajanta is intensely emotional and confident in the interpretation of its meaning, uplifting the spectator by its impressiveness. Comparison of these two different types of paintings will convince one that the Rajput work draws its inspiration, manner and technique from the Mogul characterising its own impulse, but completely lacks the grandeur of the Mogul. The only similarity in the Rajput and Ajanta is to be found in that curious manner of painting more than one subject on wall surface or on a single sheet of paper divided into several sections. Plate XVII.

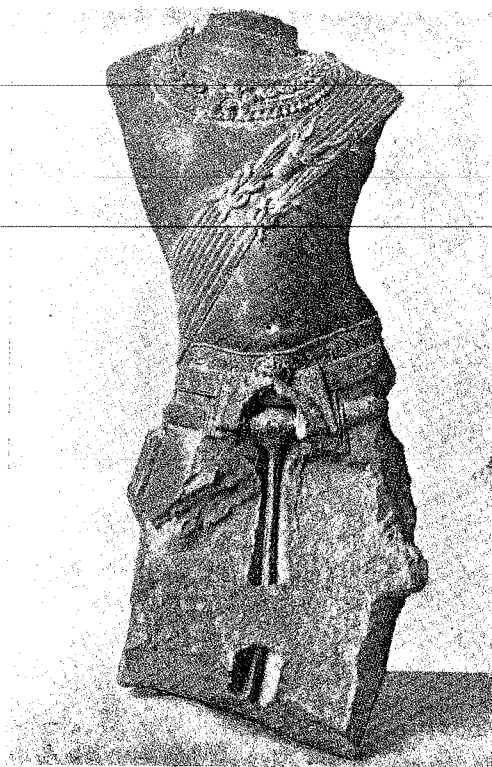
PLATE NO. XVII.



ABHISHEKA CEREMONY
Cave No. 1 Ajanta.

From Ajanta by John Griffiths.

PLATE NO. XVIII.



TORSO
(Recovered from Bbilsa near Sanchi)

By courtesy of the late E. B. Havel.

CHAPTER X

MODERN INDIAN ART

The depressing aspect of the present day condition of the art of painting in India needs no explanation or demonstration. The degeneration in quality is impossible to exaggerate. Paintings ostentiously shown at Art exhibitions reveal the extent to which Indian artists have fallen in degradation. Western influence in design and execution are a travesty and a mockery of their former selves. Backed by English teachers in the art schools, one innovation after another is introduced breaking the spell of their own tradition and bringing rapid deterioration in the system of the great historical arts of India. Perhaps the most glaring example is the replacement of the beautiful Mogul miniature or the grand decorative art of the caves by the most horrible imitation of the "futurist" art of Europe, rightly termed in Europe "the degenerate or the addled art of the 20th century". To this must be added the characteristic vulgarity in style unsuited to the Indian temperament and nature.

External influences have brought about so great a change in the internal life of the people that the mental attitude adopted today by the Indian is of blind imitation of the unlovely and the absurd, their attitude towards their own art is undisciplined and unprincipled, contributes gladly to the decay of Indian art.

The modern nationalist impulse is too selfish, too unimaginative based on a principle of dull prosperity to help the cause of Indian art. Nothing can be more fatal to art than that indifference shown by the nationalist towards claiming his own inheritance, for Indian art can never be great until it is again made great by Indians themselves.

There will always be difficulties in the way of the modern student. The first lies in the fact that the Indian ideal is totally different from the West. The real difference lies deeper than we realise. The West with the expression of outward beauty and the dead mechanical imitations seeks an end in itself, while the Indian has an imaginative aim and seeks to expound the mystery in nature by seeking truth in his inner consciousness, he conceives forms in the universe as objects of intellectual intuition within themselves.

Striving after the changeless and eternal has been the aim of every artist of the world who fights against the materialistic spirit. These artists possess that impersonality and aloofness which the Indian artist of the past has maintained, such artists have not used form for its own sake but for expressing the eternal through it. Material shapes are gracious not for anything inherent in them but because of something communicated.

CHAPTER I

INDIAN SCULPTURE

To work with spiritual weapons and with this power to personify various manifestations of nature to raise in the round human forms to a god head is the attainment and mission of the Indian Sculptor, who having obtained with knowledge full insight into the mysteries of creation, uses this power of thought to control all physical manifestations to attain in his work the supernatural qualities.

Imagination is the virtue of a creative artist and this rare quality is the gift of the Indian artist. Naturalism is not admitted in his aim and his tradition will prevent him from copying nature. Imaginative power and technical strength are the means with which the Indian sculptor treats his subjects; these artists have inherited their power and thought from the Aryans who gave the Indian the "Silpa Shastra."

SILPA SHASTRA

Reference to Indian sculpture in a definite form is to be found in the "Silpa Shastra",—science of architecture,—sculpture is the lesser art of architecture and laws for sculpture are included in Silpa Shastras. Rishi Kashyap Brahm of the Vedic age was the compiler of the original Silpa Shastra and is the first authority mentioned as connected with "Kala" "the science of arts".

There are thirty two sciences and sixty-four arts; "Silpa Shastra" the science of architecture is one of the thirty two. The sixty four shastras of art and manufacture include Painting, sculpture and other allied subjects of architecture. There are regular rules for everyone of the sciences and each science is divided into several sections. The Silpa Shastra was

studied by the Aryan of old as his dharma duty. Besides the thirty two shastras there are other works on the subject known as the "Mukhya" or the principle shastras, the thirty two are the Upa or auxiliary shastras.

Silpa There are a large number of works in Sanskrit literature treating the subject of Silpa Shastra which compose everything connected with architecture and sculpture. It is said that there exist 1,200,000 granthas or stanzas each containing thirty two letters in anushtup rhyme on the subject and out of this sage "vast Vadikara" composed 2,00,000. Vishvabodhiana composed 50,000 enunciating rules for the construction of human habitation and making of images. Sage Chitrasara gave attention to the building of human habitation and had his own measurements for the purpose. Manu wrote 20,000 stanzas, Sage Citra 20,000, Brahma 36,000, Indra 47,000, Surya 50,000, Sage Surya 10,000, Sage Mansara 15,000, and several others which need not be mentioned.

Amongst the several works mentioned above of the ancient days there are still to be found in manuscript form the "Mansara" the "Maya Silpa", the "Kasyapa", the "Vikhansi", the "Sanhita" the "Vastu Shastra" the "Sanathanya Silpa" and several others. Of those mentioned above the Mansara is the most complete, elaborate and exhaustive treatise of the architecture of the ancient Hindus. This work treats of a variety of subjects including the building of residential, religious and military quarters also temples and all kinds of sacred structures. It also treats of carvings and of the making of images and gives in detail measurement, proportion, and instructions for the same.

MENTION OF SCULPTURE BY ANCIENT WRITERS

Before taking up "Mansara" I will briefly refer to different writers who have dealt with the subject of sculpture.

Mastay—Purana has eight comprehensive chapters dealing in details with architecture and sculpture, three out of the eight chapters are exclusively devoted to sculpture.

Skanda—Purana has three chapters, one devoted to sculpture.

Garuda—Purana has two chapters devoted to sculpture one dealing with rules regarding the construction of images.

Agni—Purana has sixteen chapters out of which thirteen deal with sculpture. The treatment of sculpture in Agni—Purana is unique and is the most exhaustive of all Puranas. It deals with all classes of religious images including male and female deities.

Brihat—Samhita has five chapters and the subject of sculpture is treated with a master mind in his work.

Vaikhyanasagama has two chapters on sculpture one dealing with the general description of images and the other with measurements.

Sukra—Niti gives rules in detail for various kinds of images. There is a section devoted to the images of animals connected with the deities, the image of Gaupati, of child Krishna, images of witches and detailed instructions for repairing damage to images. This treatise mentions that seven Tala measure is to be used for a well proportioned human figure. There is a special mention relating the carving of female images.

The general measurement for sculpture is divided by different authorities into six kinds :—

1. Mana,—height of the image from head to foot.
2. Pramana,—breadth.
3. Parimana,—circumference.
4. Lamba, mana,—surface of the body.
5. Unmana,—diameter or thickness.
6. Upamana,—interspace.

Apart from this, there are several other types of measurements given by different authors in their treatises like "Matsaya—Purana", "Suprabhedagama" as well as in the "Bimbamana".

CHAPTER II

SILPA MANSARA

"Silpa Mansara" belongs to the third century B. C. The whole work is in technical sanskrit and treats most elaborately of the measurements and proportions of the whole or different parts of sacred edifices. In it are given laws for sculpture, rules for the location and orientation of temples, laying out streets in cities, selection of sites for all kinds of buildings and joinery and carpentry connected with building etc. There are chapters dealing with several classes of artists known as "Vishvakaramas" with their respective qualifications.

"Silpa Mansara" is regarded as a standard work, and is written in seventy-three chapters, each chapter laying down rules for a part of a structure or some one detail only, and the seventy chapters deal exhaustively in all its details with every requirement of architecture, including the carving of idols and repairs to broken corners of buildings or idols. After defining the Shastras mansara explains the measurement that was in vogue at the time and it will interest the reader to know how the ancients fixed their method of measurement.

The unit measure is taken from the minutest atom called "Parmanu" which is supposed to be visible to the yogic Rishis. In physical form it is explained as the floating atom seen when it comes in contact with the sunbeam that traverses through a chink in a dark place.

The table of measurement is as follows.

8 Parmanus	=	1. Ratha Ranu, a grain of dust raised by the wheel of a carriage.
8 Ratha Ranus	=	1, Balagra, a point of hair.
8 Balagras	=	1, Uka, the size of flea.

8 Ukas	=	1, Yava, a wheat grain.
6 Yavas	=	1, Kanishangula finger breadth small.
7 Yavas	=	1, Madhiumangula finger breadth middle.
8 Yavas	=	1, Puranangula = finger breadth large.
12 Purnangulas,	=	1, Vitasi = a span.
2 Vitastis	=	1, Hasta = a cubit.
4 Hastas	=	1, Danda = a pole.
8 Dandas	=	1, Rajju = a rope or 48 feet length.

These measurements were used in building Rathas, Vimanas, Pavilions capital towns, towns, villages, palaces, forts, tanks, streets, highways, dwellings, etc. One chapter deals with auspicious and inauspicious moments and gives in detail such moments as are auspicious for beginning the work. Mansara mentions that this science has come from Brahama to Garaga a Rishi who lived in the beginning of the "Kalyuga".

In planning a town mansara mentions that residences for hunters, fishermen, those that rear birds and people of a similar class should be located on the northern region of the town. It was the usual custom to set out for a hunting expedition always towards the north, just as it has been for Brahmins to look eastwards and proceed that way while starting for any auspicious journey. The places for the performances of Yagnas or Yagas, the study of Vedas, halls for lectures on religion and philosophy and other intellectual training should be located only towards the east of the town, while places of corporal enjoyments such as theatres, dancing halls, music halls and the like should be located in the southern region.

The general plan of a town was designed to follow the cosmic right angle, the so called magic square showing the four cardinal waters of the great Universe. The eastern axis of the plan ran mainly east to west as it ensured the principle streets being purified and disinfected by the rays of the sun sweeping through them from morning to sunset, while the intersection of the main streets by shorter ones running north to south provided for the best and perfect circulation of air ensuring the utmost benefit to the dwellings from the cool breezes called "Malya Maruta".

The centre of the ancient village was usually the place for the assembly hall of the council of elders, originally a banyan tree was the assembly hall of a small village. In the bigger village, a pillared "Mandapam" (pavilion) took the place of the tree. In this system can be traced the root of the idea of the Bodhi tree which represented the wisdom of sages long before the forest became the place of meditation for the sage. Being the centre of the magic square, it was also the tree of Vishnu, of which the sun, the moon and the stars were the fruit and the blue vault of heaven the foliage.

The aim of the Indian artist was to work for God, King and humanity and not for the satisfaction of his materialistic self. The Indian artist was a specialist and if he was not religiously observant of rules, he was condemned by the law makers.

In Chapter 51 Mansara deals with the Traid. Triamurti-ladshavidhana. This chapter is divided into two parts the first refers to the material, which are nine in kind, allowed to be used for the modelling of idols. The second part after explaining the external features of the deities gives minute descriptions of the images of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. This chapter mentions that the images of the members of the Traid are to be measured in the largest type of Dasa-tala measurement and of their consorts in the middle type. The measurement of these two types are most elaborately discussed in two separate chapters. A chapter is devoted to the making of pedestals for images giving measurement and describing different shapes to be used for deities.

Chapter 54 "Sakti-lekshana-vidhana" (concerning female deities). In this chapter Mansara advocated three kinds of measurements. "Dasa-tala" the face should be ten times the whole length of the body. "Nava-tala" nine times and "Ashta-tala" eight times the height of the face. In this chapter are also described the costumes, ornaments decorations, etc. connected with the deity in detail.

References are made to the carving of Jain and Buddhist images, and also images of sages. The measurement for the images of sages is in seven

tala measure. As a general rule the length of the figure is divided into 84 equal parts which are proportionately distributed amongst different limbs. There are chapters on making of the images of Yaksha. Vidya-dharas, images of devotees and various animals and birds connected with the deities.

Mansara writes a special chapter on the "chiselling of the eye" and great importance is attached to the eyes of the idols. In connection with this, there is a ritualistic ceremony to be carried out before undertaking this work which consists of performing sacrifice with holy fire and worshipping of different deities.

Here it may be mentioned that though reference to Jain and Buddhist images are made, Mansara disposes of the question of Jain images in a few lines and the Buddhist get a meagre 18 lines, with instructions that quarters allotted to Jain and Buddhist temples and their deities should be outside the village and towns. This deliberate slight cannot be passed unnoticed ~~harmonis~~, etc.

Knowledge of music was considered essential for sculptor, painter and architect, for according to Mansara music assists in the use of harmonis^{es}, etc.

Mansara closes his work by stating that the science of architecture and sculpture was originally described by Brahama and all the other gods and that Mansara had been the compiler on the basis of these authorities.

CHAPTER III

THE INFLUENCE OF YOGA

This central idea ran through the minds of that ancient sculptors of India who derived their knowledge and understanding from the ancient law givers and closely maintained this tradition till yogic knowledge brought about a different outlook. They were told that only through yoga power was obtained and the mysteries of the universe came out fully to one's insight; this was followed by certain symbolic attributes for the representations of men and supermen and by way of explanations noted down formulas for sculptors; such as marks of identity. A superman otherwise god, will have his eyebrows joined together, a particular mark of wisdom should be on the head, three lines on the neck, a certain sign to indicate spiritual vision on the forehead; he must also have the eternal youth with a body like a lion, massive shoulders, a narrow waist, supple and round limbs as smooth as a woman's that transcended all forms. This was the ideal of the yogic days. This symbolism further explain certain characteristic expressions in which mystic revelations were brought on the surface. (Plate XIX-XX).

This thought was further fettered by strict and more rigid dictates, cutting off the scope of individual imagination when it was enjoined on the sculptor that before carving an image he should meditate on the deities which he worshiped, then only would be achieved success. No other way is possible but this is the only one to make images. Before such dictates even the highest intellect could hardly win absolute emancipation. This limitation resulted in blindly moulding mishapen images of gods as it was considered that this was better than making a perfect image of man.

Canons insisting on this formalised ideal took hold of the Indian mind, it was easier to follow as the responsibility of imagination and thinking

By cou

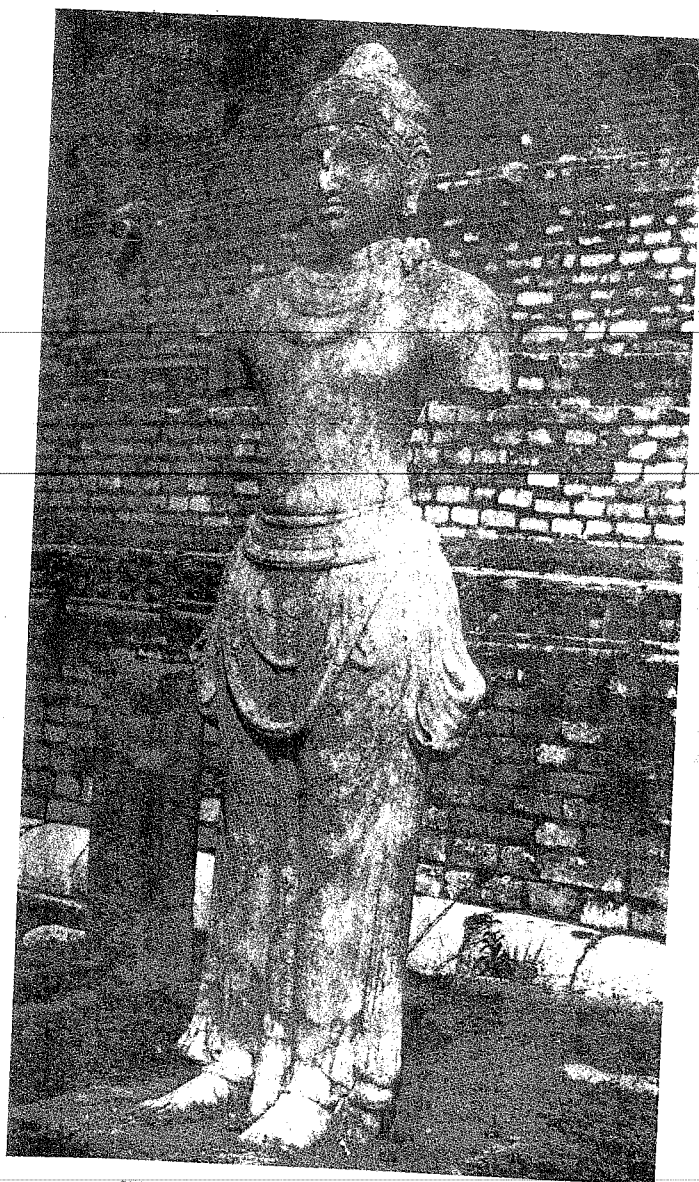
PLATE NO. XIX.



BÜDDHA
(Angkor Wat, Cambodia)

By courtesy of the late F. B. Head

PLATE NO. XX.



STATUE OF KING DATHA GAMANI
at Anuradhapura.
By courtesy of the late E. B. Havel.

was removed from the artist's shoulders and the artist considered this more compelling and deeper than Nature herself. Art was of less importance than the laws laid down by the "shastras", for the "Shastras" say "If the measurement be out by even half an inch, the result will be the loss of wealth or death". ("Sariputra"). Such canons placed the artist in constant fear and superstition which kept him ignorant and an inferior craftsman. The aim of such art is not consistent with life, it is not even religious but the Indians of those days regarded this as absolute and universal, both fear and desire inspired lesser art that belongs to the common things of life. If this type of production can be called art it becomes only a way of looking at things more than anything else.

This ideal did not realise perfect art forms though it was of great antiquity. It was the doctrine of Yoga that brought in the immovably fixed idea in the mind of the sculptor which controlled his production. This convention held all artistic thoughts and imagination fettered. Further, the sculptor was made to feel that ~~he~~^{to} attain supreme joy and harmony with his Eternal the characteristic expression which reveals yogic thoughts are the only and the real ideal for the artist.

This condition prevented the development of artistic conception, the ideal utilised was the same all throughout the ages and the variation in the quality was a mere incident. In the representation of deities every period was alike as the artist applied the same law and principle to all his productions without realising the motive for which the laws came into existence. This yogic ideal brought artistic weakness in the expression of art and this was the product of a particular condition that moulded the national life and culture of the people.

Faith in the law givers and shastras is something that will not be seen in any part of the globe as much as in India; no one understands the significance of symbols as do the Indians. Their belief springs from reflective recognition as they perceive its significance directly; their very life is affected by the meaning these symbols hold and in this artist's faith is so strong that he can transfer the action of his consciousness from the

sphere of material things into the world of mental images, and find in them that which he thinks is essentially real, and in this process he acquires new possibilities of experience. In the ordinary course of occurrences he gets connected with external events of nature but in this particular mental phase he not only remains entirely independent of externals but perceives their true significance in their non-unified spirit.

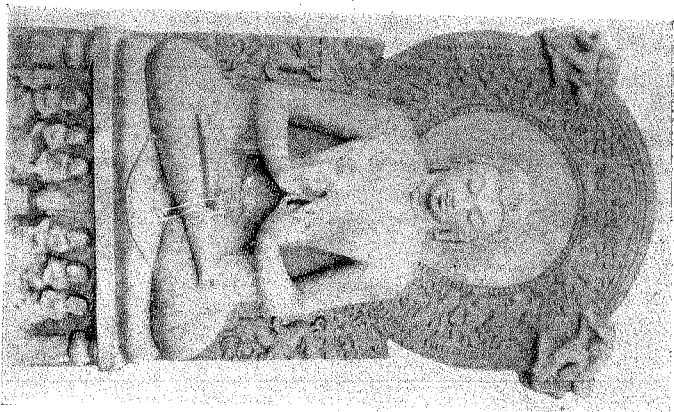
This will explain why this particular type of art will not be understood purely with reason. Beyond the Shastric dictates there is no unified plan that underlies its conception and no general motive has controlled its execution, this peculiarity is fully expressed in the plastic art of the Dravidian, the exuberance in the production is so great that it impulsively and blindly follows its own concepts, uncontrolled, changing from one place to another as if by its own fate.

PLATE NO. XXI.



PRAJNA PARAMITA

By courtesy of the late E. B. Havel.



BUDDHA
(Samabh)

By courtesy of the late E. B. Havell.

CHAPTER IV GANDHARA SCULPTURE

Gandhara art is that phase in Indian sculpture which changed its characteristics after coming into contact with the Graeco-Roman art. The Gandhara sculptors deliberately caused this change and formed new ideals upon the Greek examples brought over along with their artists when that part of the country was invaded by the Romans. Although the influence of this art was strong the Indian sculptors refrained to a great measure from the representation of anatomical effect, as they were pre-occupied by the symbols and conventions of their country. The Indian did not permit himself to be completely lost in the knowledge of surface exactness of the human body.

About the period when this type of sculpture was produced in Gandhara, Greek art was an article of export and the Greek art workers of inferior standing travelled about to search for work in foreign countries. The kings of Gandhara engaged this type of artist to work for them and produce Buddha's images. These craftsmen—for they cannot be called artists,—were working under the guidance of the Buddhist priests, utilising such Indian thought as they were able to grasp. These inferior craftsmen tried to adopt the undigested Indian ideal in their work which was more a degraded handicraft of Greece than any particular art. The Indian ideal was never really absorbed by Greek artisans and the Buddhas of that period are soulless figures in uncomfortable attitudes of Indian asceticism; even in the best Gandhara sculpture we do not find any spiritualistic feeling or ideas on which the Indian ideal is based.

In Gandhara sculpture there is the feeling of commercialism which breathes insincerity. In spite of its superficial elegance it is pretty and feeble betraying all the signs of a fallen art. All throughout there is

want of spirituality and this is conspicuous even in the best examples of Gandhara sculpture. The Gandhara examples artistically, technically and ideally never approached anywhere near the work of Bhilsa, Elephanta; Anuradhapura and Java.

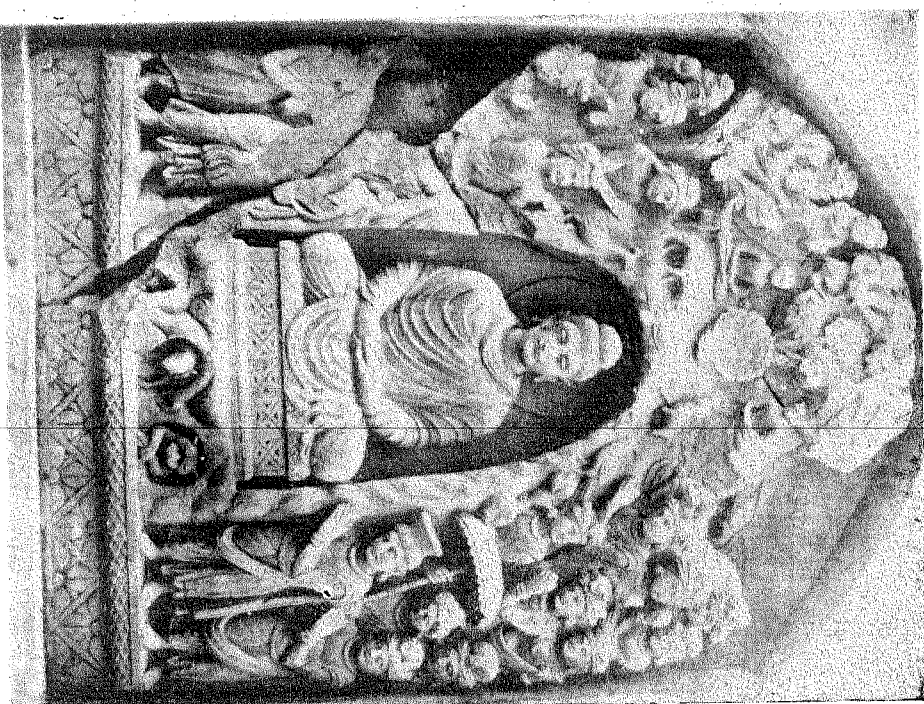
The difference in the conception of Gandhara and earlier Indian sculpture is so striking that it hardly leaves any doubt that it is an uninspired art. It is expressionless, mechanical and therefore tiresome and whenever there is an attempt at Indianization it is affected and shallow; the genuine Indian feeling of restrained dignity and calm conviction is entirely absent. (*Plate XXV*).

SANCHI SCULPTURE

Sanchi is a few miles from Bhilsa near Vidisha once the capital of Eastern Malva. Sanchi had an university connected with the town of Vidisha, later it continued to be a seat of Buddhist learning and the present monument illustrates the development of Indian sculpture of the time. (*Plates XVIII*).

Sanchi sculptures are sermons expounding the legends and the philosophy of Buddhist doctrine. They also relate the different stories of the life of Buddha and interpret the meaning in symbolic language. In illustrating different stories the sculptor shows complete knowledge of the subject and love for carving in low relief. The work is carried out in the fashion of a jeweller or an ivory carver and shows that the knowledge is derived from the ancient school of sculptors. Sanchi art is an artistic expression of life and thought of the Aranyaka sages, Sanchi work is rich in beauty and variety, advanced in technique and accomplished in design and gives a true insight into Indo,—Aryan thought. The work is vigorous in execution and modelled with great knowledge of drawing and understanding of the round. The movements of the figures are fluid and the religious feeling in vivid in its narration. In decorative design it leaves nothing to be desired.

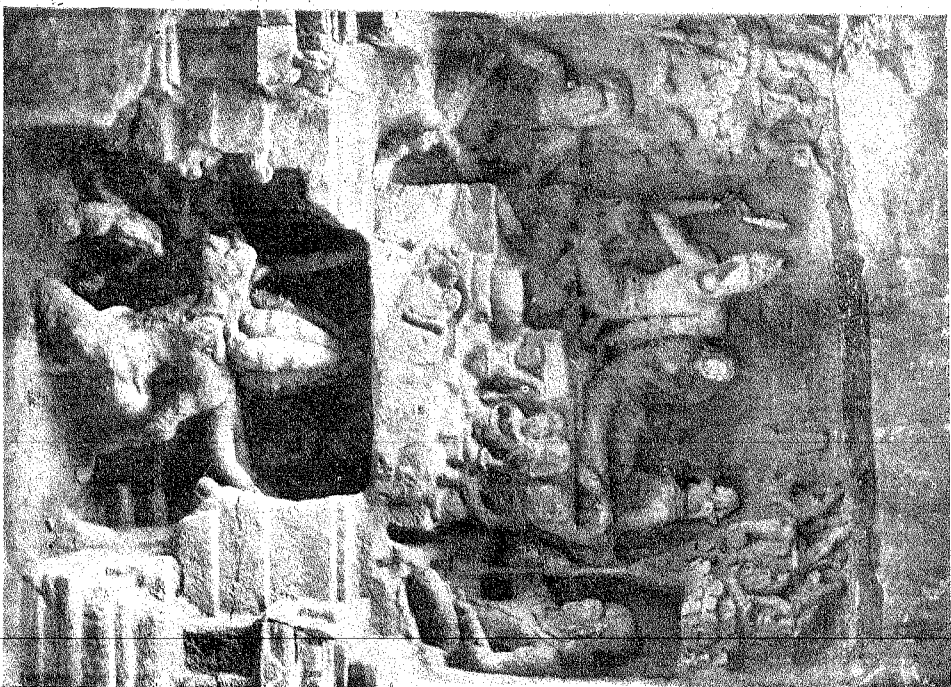
PLATE NO. XXV.



BUDDHA
(Gandhara).

By courtesy of the late F. B. Havel.

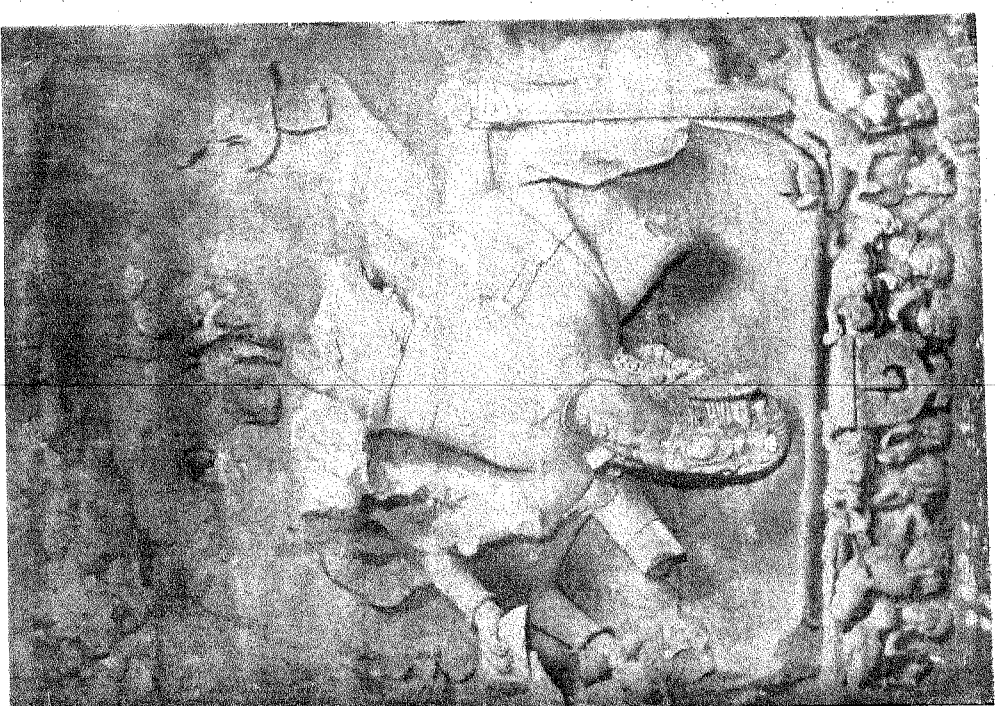
PLATE NO. XXVI.



*RAVANA under KAILASA
(Ellora Caves).*

By courtesy of the late E. B. Havel.

PLATE NO. XXIV.



*SHIVA AS BHAIRAVA
(Ellora Caves)*

By courtesy of the late E. B. Havel.

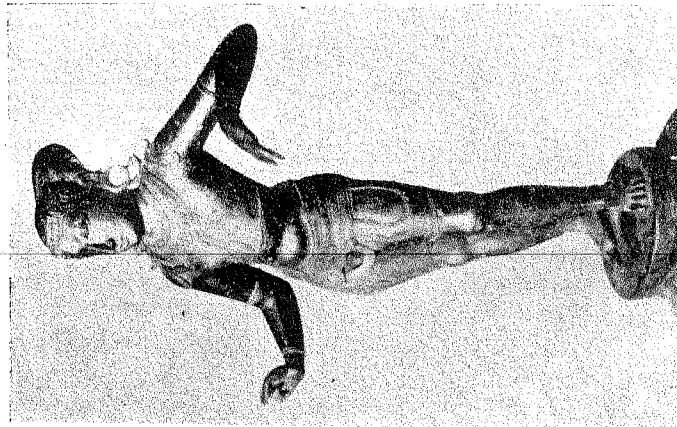
The gateways of Sanchi and particularly the one on the north is a remarkable specimen of low relief carving, designed by a master mason who had full knowledge of the *Silpa Shashtra*. Its composition and setting is most appropriate and the spaces are designed with understanding. The relief work is so manipulated as to get full advantage of the play of light and shade which gives extreme richness to the ornamentation. The design is worked in an unerring pattern and all throughout it has a masterly touch, evidence of a great skill in plastic technique.

Sanchi sculpture is the evidence of a great Buddhist art which influenced Amravati, Ceylon and Java. The affinity in design and execution shows close similarity in its work. Sanchi sculptors derived its inspiration from Aryan culture and displays true artistic insight into the life of the people of that period. These artists have carried out the tradition of Indo-Aryan art, as far as conditions allowed; it does not however fulfil its ideals completely.

ELLORA AND ELEPHANTA

The treatment of the sculpture of Ellora and Elephanta maintains to a great extent the Aryan ideal and the stories told in stones are intense in dramatic conception. Here the execution and technique are powerful, the composition and grouping masterly and the treatment so subtle as to give it the effect of a painting, so remarkable is the manipulation of light and shade. This is forcibly expressed in "Kailasa" at Ellora. Shiva on the top of Kailas mountain is serene and undisturbed while Ravan below is prone with horror at his failure. The light and shade is so arranged as to give it a mystical appearance and shows Ravana in a demonical aspect, while Shiva and Parvati appear supremely dignified, unconcerned, and godlike. The same subject differently conceived and treated in Elephanta shows the astonishing freedom with which this great piece of sculpture is carved out of a solid rock keeping the high artistic qualities and impressive dignity needed for such a subject. (Plate XXIV—XXVI).

PLATE NO. XXIII



SUNDARA MURTI

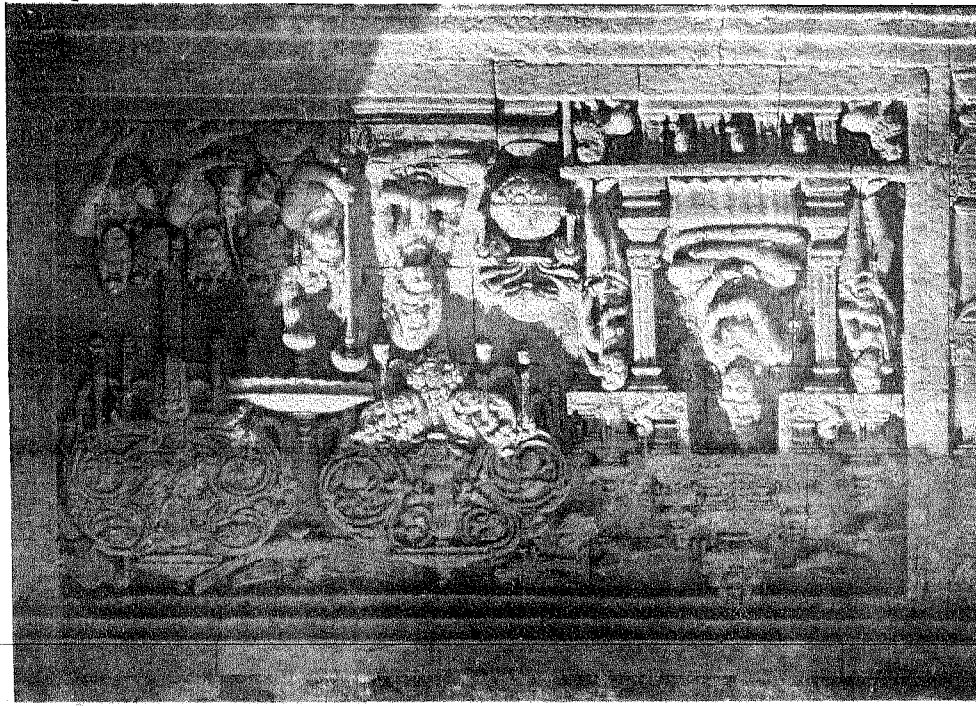
By courtesy of the late E. B. Havel.

SCULPTURE AT BOROBUDUR IN JAVA

Indian art and its traditions migrated to Java where the art of sculpture reached its highest expression in the magnificent monument "The Shrine of Borobudur". The great building of Borobudur is carved and modelled from base to the seventh story expounding the history and mythology of the Buddhist faith in continued sequence. The bas reliefs are so designed that anyone could read and understand the life, philosophy and message of Buddha. The sculptured galleries known as the pilgrims procession path, explaining the various stages in Buddhist religion and teaching measures nearly three miles in length. For the devout Buddhist pilgrim who passed through this gallery of carved sculptors these are illustrated scriptures which even the most ignorant could read. Apart from these sculptured reliefs there are innumerable images of Buddhas and Buddhisattvas all over Java. The entire work exhibits the Indian sculptors' great achievement, it is the inspired work in the true spirit of Indian genius unsurpassed in the art of low relief, conveying the essence of truth magnificently symbolised in delivering the divine message. (Plate XXVII).

In these galleries are illustrated one hundred and twenty scenes from the life of Buddha and as many Jatakas. The execution though it belongs to different periods has many phases of artistic achievement of the highest merit. They are an honest endeavour of a supremely devout religia-philosopher artist expounding the deep and symbolic meaning of Buddhist religious thought. The Borobudur art is sacred therefore less conscious, it is simple therefore unaffected. It is elaborate but impressive and convincing. The symbolic accessories make the art more imaginative and raise it high in artistic feeling.

The Borobudur sculptors in giving expression to their art aimed at absolute truth. To tell the story in this particular way was to them of greater importance than the consideration of fitting in accessories to make the picture appear pleasing to the uncultured. The artist was concerned in relating the events as he thought the master may have conceived them,



Relief in BOROBUDUR
(Java)

PLATE NO. XXVII.

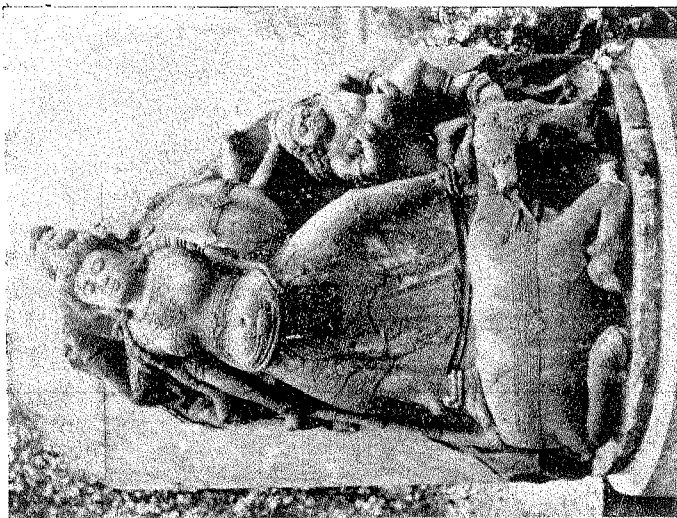
his efforts were an honest endeavour to reach the soul of the people for whom it was intended. In Borobudur art all that is small and common is eliminated, nature purified and the sympathy between the subject and the artist is wonderfully manifested. The artists thought concentrated on the love of Buddha. To repeat the message the master has pronounced once again to the world was the only concern of the sculpture. The artist received inspiration from the unseen forces and his soul was one with the master. This is the feeling the sculptures of Borobudur produce on the visitor. The spiritual power of the art has transcended all limitations and produced a divinely inspired monument for all ages and for all peoples.

CHAPTER V

SCULPTURE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

At this period the art of Indian sculpture was loosing its hold on the people and the artist, with the result that the productions became mechanical and insincere. Innumerable statues in bronze and stone yielded to the workers that were without art inspiration. Convention and symbolism degenerated into meaningless signs and laws, and the art fell into unintelligent formalised shapes; mind of the artist had sunk into narrow channels and his art became base, consciousness transformed into modelling forms that were grotesque and the ideal into personification of unseemly representations of deities. In these productions the different attributes to the deity was all the artist thought of, and subject and the deity received no consideration. There was no ideal, no religious ecstasy no spiritual sentiment not even an attempt at realistic personification of the deity, but a course ugly grotesque and formless something that was named god and goddess. All the grandeur and glory of a great art was reduced to these degenerate and unworthy examples that did not even fulfill the requirements of a curio or a toy shop.

PLATE NO. XXIII A.



DURGA SLAYIN MAHISURA.

By courtesy of the late E. B. Havel.

CONCLUSION

Indian art of the ancient law givers is practically dead and the modern artist is doing all he can to strangle permanently and remove the same from his land. The tradition lingers, but the spirit lives to serve the divine truth when the Indian will wake from his death-like slumber and desire to make this art a living force once again. The modern intelligence is unable to understand the ethical value of Indian art and the present day paper artist finds no beauty or meaning in it; so he produces debased art. One hopes that we may yet find a man of Mogul understanding to utilise the eminence artistic resources of the country. The question is, if people of ancient days could produce such dignified and noble monuments what deters the present day Indian, with infinitely more resources at his disposal to produce works of art of this standard if not better.

SOME FOREIGN OPINION ON INDIAN ART

1. Professor Grunwedel :—

"The ideal type of Buddha was created for Buddhist art by foreigners."

2. Mr. Vincent Smith :—

"The feeble conventionalism of ordinary Indian art."

3. Mr. Vincent Smith :—

"Whoever seriously undertakes the critical study of the paintings of Ajanta and Bagh will find, that the artists drew their inspiration from the west."

4. Sir George Birdwood :—

(referring to an Indian bronze statue) "You can get as much inspiration out of this as you would out of a boiled suet pudding."

5. One archaeologist :—

"That the peculiarities of Indian religious sculpture and painting were such as are found in the art of all early stages of civilisation, in the crude attempt of savage races and in the untutored scrawlings of childhood."

6. Dr. Leemans :—

"That the Hindu horror of pollution prevented Indians from dissecting the dead bodies to obtain sufficient knowledge of anatomy" (meaning all Indian figures are anatomically imperfect).

7. Mr. Moor :—

"That baths and frequent anointments in which the Indians indulge had the effect of softening and effacing the contours, so that the Indian artists were after all really trying to imitate natural effect."

8. Dr. Leemans, another archaeologist :—

"That the Indian artist was so preoccupied by the great number of symbols of the Hindu cult that he did not permit himself to be raised to the highest level of his art by an exact knowledge of the anatomy of the human body."

9. Prof. Grunwedel :—

"The shoulders loaded with broad chains, arms and legs covered with metal rings, bodies encircled with richly linked girdles, could never have attained an anatomically correct form."

10. A European artist :—

"The oriental can neither draw nor model the figure correctly."

11. Ruskin :—

"In a lecture on Indian Art at the South Kensington in 1858 said, "Indian Art, forms its compositions out of meaningless fragments of colour, or if it represents any living creature, it represents that creature under some distorted and monstrous form."

12. Dr. Cousins :—

"The Art of India never represents natural facts." He quotes the above expression of Ruskin as an accompaniment to his statement.

13. Ruskin :— Later

"We Europeans who live in India today, have whole eras of mighty history concentrated in the existence of a noble art; but the history is not our history, so we neither feel it nor rejoice, but rather trample it heedlessly under our feet."

14. Bentinck :—

"Bentinck was diverted from selling the Taj Mahal of Agra for the value of its marble because the proceeds of a test auction of materials from the Agra palace proved unsatisfactory."

15. Macaulay :— Said

"All Indian art was worthless and the whole of Indian and Arabic literature was not worth a single bookshelf of a good English library."

16. Francois Bernier :—

(French Physician to Aurangzeb)

"But these defects would soon be corrected if they possessed good master and were instructed in the rules of art."

7. Percy Brown :—

"One style of painting known as Jarah consisted in encrusting parts of the pictures with real pearls and precious stones." He must mean 'Jadaoo'.

18. Dr. Vincent Smith :—

"There is some reason for thinking that the grandeur of the proportion of buildings in the North of India and Bijapur may be partly due to the teaching of foreign school."

SOME FACTS CONCERNING ART

1. Archeology is not art.
2. Critic, a disappointed artist.
3. Patron, a social evil.
4. A good replica without thought is bad art.
5. An indifferent replica with thought behind it is an expression of art.